

ILLUSTRATIVE
STORIES

for

Pulpit and Platform

WILLIAM MELVILLE CURRY

Illustrative Stories

For Pulpit and Platform

By

WILLIAM MELVILLE CURRY, D.D.

*Pastor of Ninth Presbyterian Church,
Philadelphia, Pa.*

Author of "The Pastor's Corner," etc.

With an Introduction by

J. WILLISON SMITH

*President, Real Estate-Land Title
and Trust Company, Philadelphia*



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE
POWELL LIBRARY

SANTA CLARITA, CA 91321

PROPERTY OF
SOUTHEASTERN BIBLE INSTITUTE LIBRARY
NEW JERSEY

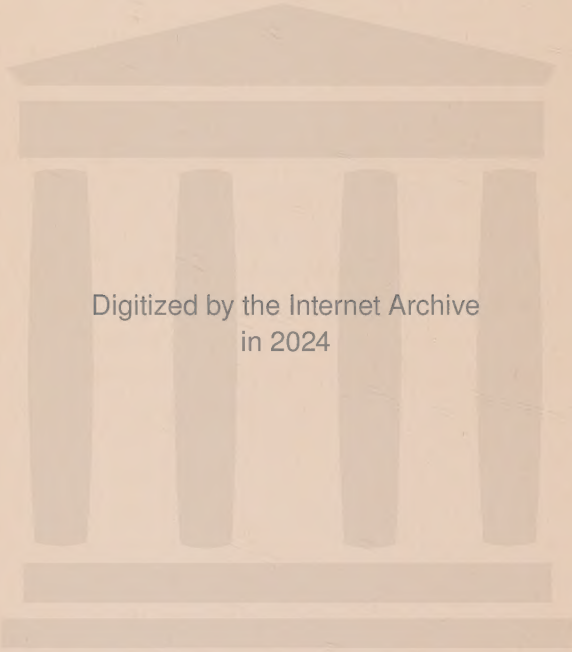
Copyright, MCMXXIX, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 851 Cass Street
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 99 George Street

To My Wife
LAURA HENSEL

*This Book is
Affectionately
Dedicated*



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

INTRODUCTION

DR. CURRY here presents a collection of stories interpreting daily events in terms of spiritual worth. From the busy life of the city, the quiet of the country and the vast expanses of the west, Dr. Curry has gathered the experiences which are here presented in usable and inspirational form. A combination of keen appreciation of spiritual values with keen observation has enabled him to draw from the most commonplace events lessons freighted with spiritual truth.

Each story, complete in itself, offers to all who peruse these pages a wealth of material on which to draw. Those who are called on to lead and teach will find here a storehouse of illustrations, clearly showing the application of Christian truth to every-day life.

J. WILLISON SMITH.

Philadelphia, Pa.

PREFACE

THE village dray had unloaded a heavy box of dry goods in front of our leading "general store." The morning local train had brought the box to town earlier in the day and then had gone on westward to serve the small communities along the line. I happened along as two young fellows connected with the store were laboriously moving the box toward the ware-room, where it was to be unpacked and the goods were to be added to the stock. The proprietor of the store, a resourceful man of the frontier, came out and, after a glance at the operation, said: "Boys, put a roller under the box." They had to hunt a roller, and then pry the box up to get it under; but it was worth while, for the box was then easily guided to its destination.

A roller under a box! On a roller a load moves easily that as dead weight seems a part of the very earth. Builders use rollers.

Jesus was the greatest of all teachers, and without a parable He seldom spoke. He put rollers under His truth. How skillfully He did it! How He lightened and brightened the Gospels with stories! How self-evident He made His truth!

It is a real joy to put a roller under a great truth, and guide it home. Most of the stories of this book

are from the lanes and woods or the fields. Occasionally they are of the study, the office or the city street. But rollers they are, to carry some truth.

So many letters have come to me from my brethren of the ministry, from teachers and others needing helps in the presentation of moral and spiritual truth, that I am induced to send this book forth. The letters have generously confessed an obligation and expressed appreciation for help received. I cherish the hope that this volume may prove its right to a place in the world of books.

W. M. C.

Philadelphia.

CONTENTS

1.	THE WORKMAN AND THE SPOOL	15
2.	"WHICH IS THE TOP OF A GRIDDLE CAKE?"	17
3.	"I'M AFRAID YOU'D SPOIL MY DOG"	19
4.	ELIMINATING THE SQUEALS	21
5.	"EVERY MILE BY FAITH!"	23
6.	THE BEAUTIFUL WAY AND THE COAL BARGE	25
7.	CYLINDERS AND MOUNTAINS	27
8.	BACK AT THE OLD HOME	29
9.	A BLIND MULE ON BRIGHT ANGEL TRAIL	31
10.	"OLD GRIZZLY"	33
11.	"I DO WANT MY MOTHER"	35
12.	"LET SOMETHING GOOD BE SAID!"	37
13.	"LET THE FIRE FALL!"	39
14.	BITTER WATER!	41
15.	THE VOICE IN SILENT SPACES	43
16.	BROKEN GLASSES	45
17.	THE CHRISTMAS HOLLY	47
18.	"DADDY, WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?"	49
19.	"THEY ARE MY TREES NOW"	51
20.	ANOTHER YEAR	53
21.	"NOTHING ELSE COUNTS WITHOUT THAT"	55
22.	"BUT IT'S ONLY A STEP INTO THE DESERT"	57
23.	"NO, BUT I HEARD A GOOD SERMON!"	59
24.	"WE MUST CUT EXPENSES!"	61
25.	"I HAD NOT BEEN GIVING INTELLIGENTLY"	63
26.	"WE HAVE BEEN WONDERFULLY BLEST!"	65
27.	WHERE MEMORY REVERENTLY LOITERS	67
28.	"I JUST HAD TO DO IT!"	69
29.	"NO ONE EVER TAUGHT ME"	71

30.	"HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN THERE?" . . .	73
31.	"HIS LEAF ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER" . . .	75
32.	"I'D BE TERRIBLY IN THE HOLE" . . .	77
33.	"HOME FOR SUPPER!" . . .	79
34.	"THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK" . . .	81
35.	"REALLY, GOD IS SO ELUSIVE" . . .	83
36.	"WHO IS THIS?" . . .	85
37.	NEW HEELS ON OLD PAVEMENTS . . .	87
38.	FLYING INTO NEUTRAL . . .	89
39.	"AFTERWARDS THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL" . . .	91
40.	SEEMING OR REALITY? . . .	93
41.	THE MULE THAT WOULDN'T BACK . . .	95
42.	WE ARE ENTERED INTO THEIR LABOUR . . .	97
43.	"I WONDER WHY?" . . .	99
44.	"TAKE THE BLINDERS OFF" . . .	101
45.	"FOOTSTEPS IN THE SAND" . . .	103
46.	THE DESERT AND THE STREAM . . .	105
47.	THE BLUE BIRD AND HAPPINESS . . .	107
48.	"HOW BEAUTIFUL THE SKY IS!" . . .	109
49.	"BE THAT BIGGER MAN!" . . .	111
50.	SUNSET AND EVENING CLOUDS . . .	113
51.	"WHERE DOES THIS ROAD GO?" . . .	115
52.	WHAT'S IN YOUR CUP? . . .	117
53.	PREACHING TO THE PREACHER . . .	119
54.	"PLAY THE GAME!" . . .	121
55.	"ISN'T THAT A BLOW TO RELIGION?" . . .	123
56.	"GOD AND COMPANY" . . .	125
57.	"IN THE LONG RUN" . . .	127
58.	"WHAT ARE FUNDAMENTALS?" . . .	129
59.	"I OBEY MY CONSCIENCE" . . .	131
60.	"IT MUST BE HARD TO PLEASE SO MANY" . . .	133
61.	"CHRISTMAS!" . . .	135
62.	ONE NINE TWO SEVEN . . .	137

63.	THE ASH-CARTS AND THE CHRISTMAS TREES	. 139
64.	THE CRUSADER OF OSAWATOMIE . . .	. 141
65.	"NOT DONE BY THE STORM!" . . .	. 143
66.	"I COULD HAVE SAVED A NICKEL" . . .	. 145
67.	WAYFARERS . . . . .	. 147
68.	A DARK ROAD AND A PAIR OF PLIERS . . .	. 149
69.	"WHAT DOES A-T-H-E-I-S-M SPELL?" . . .	. 151
70.	A HUNDRED PER CENT. LAWLESS . . .	. 153
71.	"I DIDN'T HAVE THE FACTS!" . . .	. 155
72.	"MY PILOT KNEW HIS BUSINESS!" . . .	. 157
73.	"I AM A MAN OF LEISURE NOW!" . . .	. 159
74.	"I MADE A BAD MISTAKE!" . . .	. 161
75.	"THE FACT ON WHICH WE BUILD" . . .	. 163
76.	A LAND OF THE SEA . . . . .	. 165
77.	"HE DOES NOT PLAY THE GAME" . . .	. 167
78.	"HE DID HIS BEST" . . . . .	. 169
79.	"I NEVER HEARD OF HER" . . .	. 171
80.	"PLEASE TELL THE OTHERS" . . .	. 173
81.	PAGEANTRY IN THE DARKNESS . . .	. 175
82.	A COMPLIMENTARY VOTE FOR GOD! . . .	. 177
83.	THE BIBLE! . . . . .	. 179
84.	LIFT UP YOUR EYES! . . . . .	. 181
85.	"ARE YOU AS BUSY AS THAT?" . . .	. 183
86.	ALWAYS IMPROVING THE BEST . . .	. 185
87.	A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE . . . . .	. 187
88.	"CANNOT AFFORD MISTAKES!" . . .	. 189

THE WORKMAN AND THE SPOOL

I WAS walking along the highway where the telephone company was placing a cable on its poles to carry a conduit filled with wires. The road was woodsy and winding and the task of the workmen was not easy, for such a rope to bear its load must be drawn taut. The winding road through the woods is a beautiful thing for the traveling public, but if the telephone people had their way all roads would be straight, with no turns except an occasional right angle. An enormous spool was fixed by the wayside paying out the cable as it was pulled by some invisible force down the winding way. Near by a man was sitting watching the operation. I said to him, "Your job seems to be to watch the spool go round." To which he replied, "My job is to do anything I am told to do. No one is of any use in our company who does not do what he is told." I stopped to talk with him for I realized that the man with the climbing-irons strapped to his legs was a philosopher in disguise. I said to him, following up his suggestion, "You people have a wonderful organization. It serves the public well." "Yes," he replied, "I suppose it does; but I do not know how well it serves, for that is not my job. But any efficiency it has is due to the rule that every man does what he is told."

As I walked on along the road I began to realize the

significance of what this employee watching the spool unwind had said. The wires reaching everywhere from centrals to homes everywhere are due to men able and willing to do what they are told. That is the secret of the efficiency of the system by which we reach our friends far and near with messages of commerce and friendship. There is no higher efficiency than to render the service to which you are assigned in the system in which you serve. It is the explanation of the immediate and satisfactory conversation you have on lifting the receiver from the hook near your desk. It brings your world near. It saves hours of time and days of toil and travel. That man by the wayside was an essential part of the system without whom the voice at the other end of the wire would not be heard.

But that wayside conversation brought to mind the Corporation of Jesus with its operatives. Are they as loyal and efficient as those of the telephone company that erects buildings and sets poles and stretches wires? I thought of the Head of the Corporation who said on so many occasions that obedience was a fundamental thing in his company. I thought of the Church with her boards and agencies, the administrative head of which is the Spirit of God, the absence of Whom means nothing can be done, no excellency attained. I thought of the congregation with its departments, the great word of which is Co-operation. So I emerged from the winding road thankful for the walk, the scenery, the bracing atmosphere of the woods, and for the lesson that had come with new emphasis from the workman and his spool.

“WHICH IS THE TOP OF A GRIDDLE CAKE?”

THERE was a vacant place at our table. The hotel had filled up with people from everywhere who were interested in the conference. With the exception of a casual acquaintance or two the faces in the dining-room were strange. But the intimacies of the dinner table soon broke through artificial restraints and friendships developed. We had already found common ground when one morning the head waiter brought another guest to our table to take the vacant place. He was a small man with a pair of laughing eyes. He was likeable at first sight and he grew in our esteem. He was a business man of middle life or a bit past who had been successful enough that his affairs could be left with others. His mind was alert and his sympathies broad. He came to the conference on vacation time to hear what leading men had to say and to keep from getting into a rut in his thinking.

The oft-recurring topic of conversation was religion. Speakers were weighed and found wanting, or approved, as the case might be. Theology was served with every course. No one had brought any feelings there to be hurt. Church history and modern tendencies came in for review. No one at that table was willing to defend any artificial line or take up the cause of a shibboleth. It turned out that we were all ministers at that table except the quiet man with the

laughing eyes. He was a college man, but trained more intensively in the school of life. One day we had been discussing earnestly the controversy in the Church between the extremists and the moderates. We had been drawing conclusions as each wished to draw them. Our friend at the end of the table told of his experience in the church of which he is an officer. He told of how the extremists sought to get into the center; of how they were sidetracked by the earnest Christian people who wanted the church to go forward on its mission. It was an illuminating story of a great church in action.

Then he said: "My wife and I often disagree. We do not always vote the same ticket. She has her views and I have mine. We have disagreed on the training of children, on how to meet social problems. But we have really quarreled only about one thing." We were interested, of course, and conversation was suspended until he was ready to go on to the end of the scene he himself had created. "The question we quarrel about," he resumed, "is, Which is the top side of a griddle cake? She insists that the top side is the side of the cake baked first. I say that the side baked last is the top side, and the cake should be served with that side up. That is our controversy." I asked whether the solution of that question, if there was a solution, would add anything to the quality of the cake or help in feeding the hungry? As I watched the smile that played around his eyes I seemed to hear a familiar voice warning against unprofitable questions that gender strife.

“I’M AFRAID YOU’D SPOIL MY DOG”

ONE of my friends of the ministry loves to be in the open fields. He is the pastor of one of our good churches and holds a high place in the estimation of the community. He radiates good-fellowship and is a desirable companion. He is fond of spending an occasional afternoon with a dog and gun. I do not suppose he uses a gun with any deadly effectiveness, but he likes the sensations afforded by the make-believe chase. Not having a dog of his own, he one day asked a friend, who was also a member of his church, for his dog for the afternoon. The owner of the dog was very much embarrassed by the request and finally said in explanation of his hesitation, “I am awfully sorry, Pastor, not to let you have him, but he is young and his habits are not fixed. I’m afraid you’d spoil my dog. He has real possibilities, and I don’t want him to learn any bad habits.” That seemed like a reasonable point of view, and it was accepted by the minister at its face value. He realized that he was not proficient in training dogs and he was sportsman enough to put down the man’s care of his dog to his credit.

Some time after that my friend, who wasn’t to be trusted with an immature dog, ran into a situation that gave him something to think about. It chanced that the man who owned the dog was also the father of two

boys not yet in their 'teens—fine lads they are, but, like the dog, with no habits fixed. The training had not yet been finished. Life was before them for good or evil. Some one had need to be on guard lest they too might learn bad habits; for there are ruined boys as well as ruined dogs. These were the thoughts in the mind of my friend as he looked into the barnyard and saw these boys in the company of a man of recognized low morals. They were having a good time with this man, their father's employee, but they were hearing things more ruinous to them than anything the minister might have done to the dog. For they were listening to coarse and profane language. They were receiving suggestions that could only poison. My friend went his way with a troubled mind, wondering whether his parishioner put a higher rating on the care and education of his dog than on the care and education of his boys.

I do not know how this story was finished; for in telling it, he omitted the last chapter. What the minister said to the father of the boys and the owner of the dog can only be surmised. I remember a question our Lord asked to enlighten some good men who were sadly out of moral alignment. He had been savagely criticized for bringing relief to a crippled man because it had been done on the Sabbath day. In response, He asked whether they would not lift a sheep out of the pit on the Sabbath day? Then He added, "How much better is a man than a sheep!" My friend might have said to that parishioner of his, "How much better are two boys than a dog!"

ELIMINATING THE SQUEALS

AN intelligent man in middle life dropped in a few days ago to discuss with me some problems that were on his mind. He is an upright, clean-living man, a nominal member of the Church. But matters of religion are confused in his mind and his way has not been clear. He feels there is an answer to his problems if he could get out of his confusion. He told me the Church had not helped him. He had been going here and there to services, but seldom to the church to which he belonged. He characterized the sermons he had heard as far removed from the practical things of life. If the Church had a message of life it had somehow failed to communicate it to him. It was the opinion of my visitor that the Church was more interested in the theories and mysteries of religion than in getting folks into the way of life.

It may be that my caller was right in part in his complaint against the Church; and he represents a type of mind and many people. Theoretical religion, we must admit, is often unduly prominent in the services. Surely it should have a minor place in pulpit ministrations. One who is lost is not interested in the theories of magnetism or the mysteries of the compass; he is interested in finding his way. Theology should be relegated to the schools, and yet it is necessary for the minister to have a theological background.

The messages of Jesus were simple, were spirit and life, but they were grounded in moral and spiritual facts. The Church should be both a channel of blessing and a trysting-place with God; but the Church cannot do for a man what God intends a man to do for himself. Even our Lord failed with many people. However efficient a college may be, an education must be won by the student. However the Church may be an opportunity, the secret of a happy Christian life rests largely with the individual.

"If a man willeth to do the will of God he shall know of the teaching," said the Apostle. There is real significance in the statement. A man must be in tune with the Infinite. The life must be brought into captivity to the law of Christ. If we get any satisfactory spiritual reaction we must be true to spiritual facts. Unless you tune in perfectly to the radio station you get squeals and howls and ear-splitting noises, but no message. It takes more than good intentions and casual attention to get music or messages from the air. Does this suggest a reason why some people who think they are religious are most uncomfortable to live with? Religion is supposed to make people kind, happy, long-suffering and gentle. We must be in tune with the Mind of Christ to get His message. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing and a little religion is a confusing thing. If you are inadequately attuned you will get only confused sounds. A Christian is one who is centered on Christ, who is in tune with Christ. That requires yoke fellowship. Maybe we have been shrinking from the yoke.

“EVERY MILE BY FAITH!”

THREE of us were standing in the edge of an orchard on a bluff overlooking the river valley. It was Memorial Day and the bonds of service were eased. The beauties of the earth and sky mingled that morning into a scene of loveliness. Nature does not deal in the singular. She is forever mingling the elements from her vast store. The impressions of that morning linger. There was the wide sweep of the Allegheny through its valley, beautiful notwithstanding the mills on either bank. Stately hills marked the path of the river and directed its flow. Those hills are always impressive, but they change their moods. In summer their mood is benevolent in a garb of life. In winter, with their blanket of snow, they are mysterious and forbidding. Under the rage of the summer storms they are stolid and grim. My fancy at times reconstructed that scene as it was when Fort Duquesne, down at the point, offered its feeble assistance to the pioneers; or when Fort Crawford's stockade stood where the little white church now stands. I do not wonder that the Indians fought for these hills and valleys, or made this spot a burial place for their chieftains.

While we were standing there the Buffalo express swung into view down the river. The blast of the engine as it rounded the hill echoed through the

valley. "He is a little late to-day," observed one of our company as the express entered the recess in the hills in which our community was located. The engineer also knew he was late and seemed to be asking the great roaring engine for all the power it had. With him it was a near-crime to be late. We knew that engineer; he was one of us. His hissing, screaming engine seemed that morning to be a demon of power. As he fled past he shouted some unheard message and as quickly as he had come he was gone. But my mind went with him through the towns, over bridges, spanning streams that tumbled down to join the river.

That train thundering past us seemed like a mad thing. Belching out smoke and cinders, plunging on resistlessly with its great weight, the song of the roaring wheels suggested a prelude of disaster. The very bank on which we stood trembled! And so it might be if our friend in the engine failed! The happy experiences in the trailing cars might be rudely interrupted if he blundered. One day I asked my friend of the fast express how he did it. "I run every mile of the way by faith," he replied. "You cannot be a good engineer unless you believe in the men who watch the tracks; in the men who give the orders and in the men who are in the towers." Then he added impressively: "And more than this, I put my trust in God and ask Him to see me through." His words recalled to mind another who said: "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God." That is a task more important than driving the engine of the fast express up the winding valley.

THE BEAUTIFUL WAY AND THE COAL BARGE

THE most beautiful road of which I know is unpretentious. It is not advertised. So far as I know it is not pictured in route books. It is not far away; which may discredit it in some minds. It has a charm all its own. I have traveled many roads, but of all I have seen I love this one best. It is a narrow road that winds in and out along the river. Sometimes it is squeezed between the hills and the river and again it emerges into some pleasant valley. The man with the level has not done his deadly work and the road often runs on the hillside or dips down to the water's edge. There is a great variety of trees along this way, and frequently they interlock their branches above you. Rocky ravines open out into the river through which rivulets tumble down from the hills. An occasional pretentious valley with its quiet stream reaches back into the woods invitingly. A canal winds along the river bank and creates a waterfall at every ravine it crosses. The locks are quaint and ancient and the foaming water from the spillway is an irresistible invitation to stop. If there is another twenty miles of equal roadside beauty I have not seen it.

I confess to having traveled this road whenever occasion offered. I have lingered at the locks and stopped at points where the river, the canal and the road create an unforgettable scene. I have talked to

men on the barges and at the locks. I have heard the sound of the boatman's horn echoing through the valley. On an afternoon going up this road I passed a number of barges going down, loaded to capacity with coal for the market. How quietly they passed through the watery lane with their burdens, making no more sound than the ripple of water. They seemed a part of the picture, an element of the enchantment. Yet for the boatmen it was commonplace enough, a matter of a day's work. As I watched the barges pass out of sight around the bend among the trees, I thought how much like real life it all was. Coal barges passing down lanes of beauty. Burdens there are for all of us, barges of toil, but they fit into the picture, they are an element of the enchantment. I wondered how much of the picture was seen by the men on the boats.

It suggested to me that after all, the things of beauty are the common things of life. My road, the river and canal! Flowers, foliage, the stately trees and sunshine! How common is the love that holds true! But it takes a free mind and heart to see the beauties of the wayside and not think altogether of barges of burden. The barge was not out of place in the scene, nor was it the entire picture. I remembered the prayer of the seer, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may see." Seeing he desired to see more.

CYLINDERS AND MOUNTAINS

ONE autumn day we were approaching the mountains of Pennsylvania through the winding Ligonier valley. It was a clear, crisp day and the foliage had put every nook and corner in bright array. The mountains were studies in colour and form. The Loyalhanna, a charming stream, having escaped from the wooded pools back in the mountains, hurried down the valley to meet us. The Indians loved this valley with such a passion as only Indians know; for they lived in the out-of-doors. They fought bitterly to retain it, and, it is said, they came back to it from far distances after they had been driven out, to stand on some eminence and gaze again upon its beauties. Here in the early days Fort Ligonier was built as a base for the operations against Fort Duquesne at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. Washington was connected with this expedition and spent considerable time at Ligonier.

On this occasion, which lingers in memory, I noticed as we approached the valley from the hills around Greensburg that my car, usually so dependable, was not responding to the pressure of my foot. It lagged on the hills and its energy faded out at times like a spent horse. When we began the ascent of the first range I knew we had a crippled engine. From this time until we reached home I was busy nursing its limited resources. It was a beautiful wayside, but my

attention was on the car every mile of the way. There never was a more beautiful day or scene from Tuscarora Summit, but I was thinking of my engine working only in a fractional way. We finally reached home weary, not with travel, but from the uncertainty whether or not we would make the next grade. It turned out that some of my cylinders were without compression. They were not all units of power as they were supposed to be, each taking its turn with the load. Instead of giving impulses that helped drive the wheels up the mountains, some were riding uselessly on the crank-shaft.

I have often reflected on that trip and the experiences with the crippled car. How it transformed pleasure into labour! It had a way of subtracting beauty from the landscape. It has seemed to me that the experiences of life are often like that; for the power of life is often depleted as we discover when we reach the mountains. The cylinders of a car are not more thoughtfully adjusted to the crank-shaft than we are organized in a functional way. A fractional body is readily discovered, but spiritual equipment not in service is not so quickly detected. With fractional equipment it is difficult to attain the goal or enjoy the wayside. Paul said God had tempered the members in the body as it pleased Him. Then he continued, "Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." So we are spiritually organized as well as physically. Are we imparting the impulse for which we were tempered into the body of Christ? Or are we like the cylinders that were carried by others?

BACK AT THE OLD HOME

FOR a long time I have wished that I might revisit my old home in Kansas. I say my old home, although nothing is very old in Kansas except the prairie. There are no ruins like the Greeks boast of and no colonial buildings such as we pride ourselves on here in Philadelphia. Yet my boyhood home is taking on signs of age. At a period of my life when memory was not registering, my father put all his earthly goods in a covered wagon and left Indiana for the land beyond the Missouri. The road he followed most of the way was two wheel tracks. The streams he crossed were without bridges. Then to think of the nightly camp-fires! I have often wished he had delayed his migration for a few years, for I missed all this through his inconsiderate haste. After a few experimental years, he settled in northeastern Kansas. Coming East to a school of theology, I have not been West since except for brief visits. My vacation this summer offered me the opportunity I had waited for.

The first place to go was the farm. The house was empty. A queer feeling came over me as I stood on the back porch, thinking of times and people now gone. The doors and windows were securely locked. In my day there was not a lock or key known to the family. I looked through the uncurtained windows and saw the familiar rooms just as they were long ago; the

dining-room where the long table had been set; the corner where my father sat during prayers. Memories of the years swept over me while I stood by the old house which had sheltered me, whose construction on the prairie I had witnessed. The orchard had gone. I went out to the place where the Early Harvest tree had stood, the first to produce in the season. And what apples they were! A ruthless hand had cut down the big cottonwood I had planted and which had grown so great. My black walnut tree, still standing, recalled to me the day I planted it. How different things were! The swimming hole was filled with black soil; there was not even a stream running through it. I felt like a stranger in my own place. A new picture was in the old frame.

The corn was in tassel. The silken threads reached out of the forming ears for the fertilizing pollen. The sight of the far-reaching fields of corn was familiar enough. These fields were needing rain. How often that has been true in Kansas! The sky was brazen. The sun poured out heat pitilessly. Fissures opened in the ground, parched by drouth. These far-flung fields which cost so much toil and had such prospect of harvest were ready to perish. My friend said as he searched the sky for a sign of a cloud, "Rain now would mean wealth." Before we left we witnessed a cloud rolling up from the west and pouring out its flood over the fields, filling up its fissures. And I thought how much we depend on God. The increase, after all, is of God, both in the field and in the Church.

A BLIND MULE ON BRIGHT ANGEL TRAIL

WHEN we were planning our Western trip the Grand Canyon made its appeal to us. As we stood on the rim of that mighty chasm we were not sorry that we had yielded. What a staggering thing Grand Canyon is! It challenges every emotion. Its moods change with the changing sun. Even in the darkness one can feel its yawning void. At one moment it seems like a vast, silent and deserted ruins of a civilization of giants. Again it presents itself as an artist's study in form and colour. Fancy runs riot as one looks down upon its myriad gigantic forms in a vast chasm a mile deep, thirteen across and reaching out into the horizon on the right and left. There are two hundred miles of it, a geological wonder, at the bottom of which flows the swift, silt-laden river. It is so vast, so colourful that one cannot comprehend it. As the sun sinks into the desert fancy builds of its valleys and peaks and walls, a city beautiful. The myriad forms left in disordered chance by centuries of erosion resolve into an ordered scene, the work of a designer. Finally darkness, rising quickly from the depth, meets the darkening sky and your city is gone; for there is no light, no smoke, no noise. That city is motionless as death.

We saw it from the depth too. My companion decided to hike down one trail and up the other which

32 A BLIND MULE ON BRIGHT ANGEL TRAIL

he did, emerging ten hours later, footsore and weary. He crossed the river and rested an hour at Phantom Ranch before starting that mile climb in a seven-mile trail. I decided that my only chance to see the river was invested in a mule. I am free to confess that had I been back on the rim while we were turning that first elbow in Bright Angel Trail I would have stayed there. But there seemed to be no honorable way to get back. Some women in the train ahead did not appear to be afraid. They did not faint or scream as one felt they should do by rights. I resolved not to show the white feather which was fluttering in the winds of my soul. As I looked for one brief moment over the head of my mule into the abyss, I thought of the Scripture, "A horse is a vain thing for safety," and wondered if David wrote it after an experience on some Bright Angel Trail. Only my steed was a mule that did not seem to have wit enough to be afraid. While he was picking his way down that seemingly impossible trail some one in the rear shouted to a friend in front, "How would you like to ride a blind mule down this trail?"

That question made me shiver. But I thought of another trail more difficult still to negotiate, along which men and women are going blindly. It is the trail of life! I had a thrill of comfort on that rocky ledge with that question echoing in my heart as I thought of Him who said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"OLD GRIZZLY"

MOST all the world has heard of the big trees of California. They have been one of the talking points of that rather loquacious state. California believes in telling the world about her good points and she has a convincing way with her. Promise and realization often seem far apart to the traveler, but this does not apply to the "Big Trees." They are well called the "Pillars of the Sky." As you look the wonder grows. There are twenty-six groups of these great redwoods still standing. The Wawona tree is said to be the best known tree in the world. It is the tree so often pictured with a motor bus passing through a tunnel that pierces its great body. It is thirty-two miles from Yosemite out to the Mariposa grove of the giant Sequoias. The road leads up the side of the mountain, back and forth around hairpin curves for thousands of feet. Every mile of the way is through a mountainous wonderland. But no surrounding grandeur can detract from the wonder of these trees.

It was "Old Grizzly" that captivated me. It is well named, for it is a shaggy old fellow. It is agreed that this tree is the oldest living thing on earth. Hoary with age, it is still very much alive and growing. It is more than ninety feet in circumference and mighty in stature, although others of the Sequoia group are taller. I thought of Joyce Kilmer's poem to a tree;

but this is The Tree! I removed my hat to this oldest of all living things. It was only yesterday in its life when the Pilgrims landed; only recently when Cæsar fought his Gallic wars. Back through the life of man the life of this single tree goes to the beginning of recorded history. Nineveh and Tyre, ancient Greece and Rome have passed; this tree abides and flourishes. A contemporary of Methuselah, it dwarfs his years to a span. A contemporary, has this tree been, of the great men and the great events of recorded history. Here in the secluded mountain valley it has stood for four thousand, five thousand or more years, watching the epochs of human history open and close. It lived when speech was confused at Babel, when Israel hung their harps on the willows by the rivers of Babylon. I was glad to be there and stand uncovered under its venerable form.

As we made our way back from this mountain sanctuary my fancy was busy with what this tree might say to me if only I could understand its speech. It has made a wonderful fight for mundane immortality, but I saw unmistakable evidence of decay. Age is surely creeping over its vitality. And the words of the Psalmist were in my mind: “They shall perish, but thou remainest; they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed; but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail.” He was speaking of material things, of civilization, mountains, trees and men. Only God and those under His shadow are eternal.

“I DO WANT MY MOTHER!”

IT was a memorable trip we had through the Big Basin of California. We left Palo Alto in the early forenoon and drove to Santa Cruz for a dip in the ocean. But the objective this day was the Big Basin. It proved to be what the name implies. High mountains enclose a great valley apparently on every side. The State has made of it a park and built a good road through it, so locating the road as to reveal the wonders of mountains and valleys. That road leads past the big Sequoia trees, scores of them well over three hundred feet high. It winds through the valleys and skirts the rim of the basin. We came out just at sunset on the highest point with all the wonderful landscape below us. It was the climax of forty-one miles of natural beauty. The wild life under the protection of the State is no longer wild. Deer brought their baby fawns into the open to look at the passers-by. The State maintains a camp where tourists may stay under the big redwoods in the solitude of the basin to their hearts' content. I envied the people from many quarters who were sitting around camp-fires in that enchanting place.

In our party was a little girl eight years of age. Earlier in the year she had come up here to a girls' camp. She was wonderfully animated, for we were to pass through the part where her camp had been.

When we came to the place she bounded from the car and led us down a byroad to a little open space in the forest. Here was the camp! Seats made of huge logs, an immense fireplace in the center, a little shack that had served for an office. She took us down one path to the spring and down another to the sleeping quarters and down another to the chimney tree where a fire had been made in the hollow trunk of a great tree. It was all under the wonderful covering of immense trees excepting the little opening in the center. She clapped her hands and danced as she showed us the wonderful place. I did not wonder. There was a sympathetic understanding in my own heart for all she was saying and doing.

But my little friend had not been happy in that camp. She had spent her days in longing and her evenings in tears. Things went badly with her, and finally her people sent for her. When she got home she told her mother what a wonderful place it was, how nice her companions were, how much she loved those in charge. But she said, “ Oh, mother, how much I did want you! ” Her mother was more to her than trees or play, or camp! As I heard the story confidentially I thought of a great spiritual truth her childish heart was fathoming. It was a great true man who said, “ We are homesick until we are at home with God.” The camp had no compensation for the absence of mother, and the world loses its charm and its benefit when we lose God.

“LET SOMETHING GOOD BE SAID!”

I AWOKÉ slowly this morning, coming to myself by stages. Finally, when the train stopped, I knew I was awake, but sodden! It was hot. My clothing was clinging to me, wet and disagreeable. I looked at my watch and was surprised how early it was. We are in the desert west of Needles and the sun begins work early out here in August. That flaming luminary seemed to be holding a vast reflector on our part of the earth. There was nothing between me and the sun in that upper berth except a roof of hot steel. There was only one thing to do—get up, although I dreaded the ordeal of dressing. I used to negotiate the difficulties of wet clothes down by the old swimming-hole, but one had room in God’s out-of-doors to wrestle with such difficulties. That thought of the old swimming-hole did not help any. What we see out of the car window is sand, greasewood and sand for miles and yet more burnt miles. Great mountains rise out of the desert, but they too are sun-baked. Automobiles laden with luggage and gray with sand moved cautiously along the trail that in places parallels the track. The hot road enforces a speed limit remorselessly, the penalty being blowouts in a treeless waste.

While at breakfast we stopped at Bagdad (no compliment to the city of Asia and no similarity, I imagine, except in the dynamic sunshine). Besides a

small building or two there is a tank for fuel oil and another for water, and many tank cars. A half dozen trees are kept alive by a pipe that pours water into a gutter surrounding them. We had ample opportunity to store mental pictures of this artificial oasis, for our train lay here for an hour and a half. Our engine had burnt out a driving-box. The second section came up, and, no reserve engine being in sight, we appropriated their engine and are proceeding westward toward the summit of the San Bernardino Mountains, where we are supposed to escape from the desert.

On leaving Bagdad I picked up my "By the Way" booklet, issued by the company, with the purpose of enlightening myself on the geography, geology and something of the human history of this vast desert. But lo! the story is not told. There is no desert here so far as that publication is concerned. It tells of wild goats and silver mines and borax deposits. It recounts the wealth of the region and speaks of a gushing spring. But there is nothing of the three hundred miles of sand, heat, and discomfort. I called the attention of my companion to the omission and she not only justified it, but waxed eloquent on the wonders of the desert, the beauty of the spring flowers in the canyons and the unmatched glory of the night sky. She said it was good psychology, as well as good business, to tell about the goats and forget about the desert. I look out of the car window at the remorseless desert while perspiration blots my page. But even so there is something good to say even of the desert and my booklet says it all.

“LET THE FIRE FALL!”

YOSEMITE VALLEY is a place all by itself; there is nothing else like it anywhere. It is so small that it lay hidden behind its great mountains until recently. The Grand Canyon is forbidding, but the Yosemite is friendly, a marvelous forum of beauty. It is seventy-five years now since an officer of the Mariposa Battalion, sent to round up the Indians who were killing miners, wrote a description of the valley and proposed the name Yosemite. It is about seven miles long by one wide at the widest point. The Merced River tumbles into it over two enormous falls, flows softly through its beautiful seven miles and then goes splashing down its rocky, tortuous gorge into thousands of irrigating streams in the arid plains far away. The floor of the valley is 4,000 feet above sea-level, but the precipitous granite mountains rise to eight and nine thousand feet on every side.

It was in 1899 that Prof. and Mrs. David A. Curry established a primitive camp for visitors. Now quaint cabins under the trees are equipped with every convenience. The sides are mostly windows which swing open, revealing the surrounding forests and mountains. An enormous dining-room artistically fits into the landscape with a menu for the most fastidious. A large swimming-pool adds joy and comfort. An all-the-year hotel is now being built at an expense of over half a

million. When the evening comes on the people gather under the big trees for the hour of music and story. This hour has grown out of the custom of the founder to talk to his guests on the natural history of Yosemite and answer questions at the close of the day.

Behind the camp there rises the granite wall of old Glacier, three-quarters of a mile almost straight up. There were traditions of a fire fall from Glacier Point and the founder of Camp Curry revived it. When nine o'clock comes and the music and story ended, a stentorian voice shouts through the night, "O Glacier! Let the fire fall!" All eyes in the valley are turned to the top of that dark mountain, no matter how often it has been witnessed before. Presently there flows over the cliffs a stream of fire. The coals break into millions of sparks and form a slowly descending spray. It is not unlike the traditional picture of the high falls, only it is fire, red, glowing, mysterious, apparently falling out of the dark sky. The waves of fire break on a ledge of the mountain, a thousand five hundred feet down, half obscured by the tree tops. Fancy suggests the lost train of a comet falling from the sky, burning itself out; or recalls Prometheus who ventured into the home of the gods to bring fire to the earth; or compares it with the fire of God sent on Carmel. It was a wonderful spectacle and I went to my cabin after the mountain was again dark to think of the wonders of God's creation and of the spectacles which are most surely reserved for the eyes of those who gather with Him in the evening of life.

BITTER WATER!

ONE might imagine himself almost anywhere to-night beside this salt sea, impounded in a sun-baked wilderness, were it not for the memory of the road we followed to-day. Four or five extinct craters are in view; one in the midst of the lake, the others on its mountainous rim. It is a vast depression 6,400 feet above sea-level, into which mountain streams run. There is no outlet except the attenuated conduits of the sky; and these take only pure water, leaving a constantly increasing accumulation of impurities behind. There are only a few primitive dwellings on this lake besides the cabins of the camp where we are spending the night. I asked a man at the wayside store what the lake was good for and he replied, "Not a thing!" There is not a living thing in this great body of water except a curious and useless shrimp. Yet how beautiful is this lake in the glory of the full moon! How weird and fascinating is this night scene! The ragged mountain rim is silhouetted against the sky through which pours the most glorious moonlight. But Mona Lake belongs to the desert; it is bitter, lost from the channels of living water.

But back along the canyon is the trail we followed and we know this is America. Our bus is a powerful one of the fleet belonging to the Camp Curry organization. We left Yosemite in the early morning and

climbed up the dizzy edge of the mountain over the Big Oak Flats road and through miles and miles of woods to Lake Tenaya where we had lunch in one of the camps maintained by the company. Tenaya is a little gem of water in a mountain setting over eight thousand feet above sea-level. We crossed the course of Tuolumne River, in the meadows of the same name, turbulent in its descent from the foot of Mt. Lyell glacier to Hetch Hetchy. We came through Tioga Pass at an elevation of ten thousand feet and entered the Leevining Canyon. I suppose there is no road anywhere more spectacular. For miles it is a shelf cut in the side of the mountain. At places there is a sheer drop below you of hundreds, in some places thousands, of feet. Confidence in the driver and the sturdy bus enabled me to get a joyous thrill from this majestic view instead of a spasm of fright.

As I walk to-night beside this desert sea, transformed by the moon into a vast silvered mirror, the native's words in answer to my question keep repeating themselves. Not good for a thing! I thought of the beautiful stream that tumbles out of Tioga Pass from the melting snow and flows into this impounded water. What a despoiler of water is this salt sea! The sparkling water of the mountain it turns into brine! I have seen life despoiled like that. Life is sweet and strong and sings as it flows. But there are moral depressions that impound life. These are brackish and turn all streams they receive into brine. What a contrast to the quiet waters in the green pastures of God's care!

THE VOICE IN SILENT SPACES

THEY stood in a row by the staircase, three of them, waiting for the decision with something of restraint due to good training, but with ill-concealed anxiety. When I proposed an afternoon in La Honda Pass, with our supper in the open, there was a restrained shout and the clapping of three pairs of small hands. Margaret was the oldest and much the wisest, although her wisdom was discounted by the others because she was a girl. George Henry, a sturdy fellow, was the next. The last and least was Marshall, whom I also called The Judge. He usually made up for his lack of stature by standing on the first step of the stair, as he was doing now, just where it turns around the newel.

So that afternoon we made our way out past the university and followed the winding road to the summit and began the descent into the narrow pass of La Honda. The road was sometimes around the shoulder of a mountain affording us a wonderful view, and again it dropped into the defiles where the day was subdued to twilight. Here and there a canopy of nature's own make overarched the road. For an hour or more we drifted down this enchanting way and came to a place where the valley opens out in a little recess. This open space was utilized by a diminutive novelty store. It was proposed that we stop here for redwood burls,

which we did. Crossing the stream on a rustic bridge, we stopped under a giant redwood. The mountains towered high on either side and the valley was little more than a gorge. A sparkling stream hurried noisily over a rock-strewn course on its way to the Pacific. How far from the strife of tongues and the rumour of deceit it all seemed! It was a place where one might feel the presence of God. On the shaggy tree under which the car stood a board was affixed which claimed for the tree an age of three thousand years. It was, then, a contemporary of the Patriarchs. I wondered what manner of men in these ages might have entered the pass and stood under this tree.

My revery was interrupted by a voice. Following it, I found a radio. That valley was not secluded after all. A voice from the outside world was echoing among the trees and stirring its quiet life. It was a voice from across the continent, speaking of problems, arguing of rights, urging policies. The burls having been presently procured, we went on our way. Finding an open space that invited us, we spread our supper and watched the slanting sun splash golden colours on the mountainside and cast lengthening shadows. Reluctantly we left the sanctuary " 'Mongst boughs pavilioned." And as we went the ancient question arose among my thoughts, " Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy Presence? " I remembered the Voice that penetrates the silent spaces, however sequestered men may be, and speaks of present duty and of the World Beyond.

BROKEN GLASSES

ONE day while in a facetious mood a companion threw a ball at me at close range. It was a holiday occasion and we were out for a good time. The ball was made of soft rubber and incapable of inflicting personal damage. I suppose his purpose was to startle me with a blow on the breast. If so, the purpose and the fact did not meet up well, for the ball hit me on the eye and my glasses fell to the ground. His aim was bad, however good his intention. The broken glasses necessitated a trip to the oculist, and I was glad he was the only one I needed to visit. Things might always be worse, or mostly so.

I have a very satisfactory oculist. I like him personally and that helps. He looks wise and you feel that he knows all about the mystery of vision. Then he has an array of mysterious looking contrivances that increase your confidence in his ability. He asks you to look into a big disk arrangement, but all you see is a red line teetering up and down against a black background as he turns the disk back and forth. He is looking into a little machine on the other side of the disk all this time, and by and by he says, "I see!" You wonder what he sees, but he never tells you. After an experience like this we went into a little room apart and he put a frame on my face and began to place different lenses before my eyes. With each one

he asked me whether I saw better or not so good. By and by he required me to read the letters in certain words on the opposite wall of the room. Then the trouble began. The oculist and I could not agree as to those letters, which I maintained I could see and which he said were not there. He was sure that the letters I said I saw I did not see at all, while I was confident I was seeing perfectly. I was willing to own his superior knowledge of the eye and the laws of vision, yet I felt I knew what I was seeing better than he did. I once heard Dr. Herrick Johnson say that ignorance, however extensive, could not discount knowledge however limited. My knowledge was limited enough, but it was definite. The difficulty was presently solved. He was looking at a line reflected in a mirror and I was not looking in the mirror at all, but at a line he had forgotten to cover. I was right about what I was seeing, and he about what he was seeing.

How often that happens outside the oculist's booth! Men wax hot in discussion and disagree mostly because they are not seeing the same things, or are looking at things differently. A common basis is a first essential to understanding. Much of all misunderstanding arises from the same sort of thing that caused the argument between my oculist and me. Paul urged Christians to "speak the same things!" This can be realized according to the prophet only when men "see eye to eye" the great truths of life.

THE CHRISTMAS HOLLY

THERE is a little bit of higher ground that attracted me on one of my trips to the Jersey shore years ago. It was along the south bank of the stream that flows down from the old mill and divided Sea Girt from Spring Lake. We had gone down for a few days' rest in the late fall. The throngs had long since departed. The breaking of the waves on the sand and the cry of the feathered folk were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the afternoon. It was evident on all sides that the summer had gone. I love the shore at unfrequented times and places. It has always seemed to me unwilling to divide interest with other attractions. On a canoe trip I once made to the old mill during the summer I had observed this place along the river and resolved to explore it some time. This fall day, when I had an afternoon all to myself, offered me the occasion. How many delightful tasks await the times when we have nothing to do!

Leaving the car in the unimproved road along the stream, I went among the trees and brush just as nature had arranged them through the summers and winters within sound of that pounding surf. There were all sorts of trees, some of considerable size. I was soon attracted by a number of holly trees, beautiful among the other trees of that fall day. All the green had vanished from the woods excepting the pine

and cedar; and the dead leaves rustled under foot as you walked. But more beautiful than the pine or cedar was the holly with its rich green leaves and brilliant red berries untouched by the cold of the wintry nights. How lovely they appeared in the bare woods, woods snugly reefed in the spirit of self-preservation for the shock of winter. The holly seemed to belong to another clime. If I had believed in fairies I surely would have waited that afternoon for some of good will to appear. Other leaves are more brilliant in summer than the holly, and other berries are just as attractive, but they were all gone! But the holly remains long into winter, only giving place for the new life of the spring. Before the leaves fall they roll themselves into a miniature cornucopia, a miniature horn of plenty. It was a good place to be that afternoon. The influences were those of a sanctuary.

I do not wonder that we use the holly for our homes and churches at Christmas. It has had a change of name because of that use; for holly is only another spelling of holy. It suggests spiritual values. Under the leaden sky and barren woods it retains its beauty. Its green leaves persisting speak of a hardy and abundant life. Its red berries brighten the picture of any wintry woodland. It is a beautiful and significant symbol of the Christmas truth. I do not wonder that it has been called the holy tree and its branches woven into wreaths that are emblematic of the life beyond the winter.

“DADDY, WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?”

I SHALL always remember the day when we went to the woods for a Christmas tree. It was a happy occasion, and its joy has lived by the grace of memory and experience has compounded its values. We were living in Crawford County then, away in the north-western part of the state where there are lakes and woods. And what snows we used to have in the winter! My companion on this expedition for a Christmas tree was a little chap about five years old. He has since left us and no path of earth I have followed has been without a shade of loneliness. He was a good friend and a helpful companion as he followed after me in my pastoral rounds. Sometimes he slowed me down, but his influence and point of view were worth any price he exacted.

It was his decision that we should go to the woods and find our Christmas tree. Just south of our village there was a fine tangle of woods. It was the upper end of the Pymatuning swamp, covering many thousands of acres. The water had receded and much of the woodland was above water all the year. I knew the paths through that primitive wood and my companion had often followed me in afternoon strolls. Snow had fallen early that year and remained. A fresh snow had fallen the night before and the landscape was white, reminding one of the garments on

the Mount of Transfiguration, white beyond the fuller's skill. The fence along the road leading to our woods was made of the overturned stumps of trees. It was a scraggly, homely fence, but now its ugliness was glorified with fantastic festoons of snow. When we entered the woods we were in fairyland. We disturbed an occasional rabbit and a pheasant ran from under a pine and whirled away. In a little open space a shapely cedar stood with a mantle of snow about it, a thing of beauty. My little pal thought we should take this tree with the snow on it just as it stood. But we left it for reasons I gave him. We soon found a beautiful little tree, cut it off near the ground and after much happy labour got it to his sled out by the road. While we stood there admiring our tree he said to me, "Daddy, what is Christmas?"

Was that an easy question to answer? The experiences we were having helped me. All through the hour we had been in the woods together the great pronouncement had been repeating itself to me, "For unto you is born this day a Saviour!" I retold to him the beautiful story. I explained why He was born in such a strange place! Then I explained that wherever folks receive Christ He is born again, born in them, and that makes Christmas. Those who give Him no room can have no Christmas. Only where Christ has come is Christmas. As he rode home astride his tree, securely bound to his sled, shouting for the joy of living, I was glad for Christmas. Many times since I have relived that afternoon and have been moved with gratitude for Christmas.

“THEY ARE MY TREES NOW”

MY physician was in a reminiscent mood and he seemed quite oblivious of the full waiting-room; it was a way he had. Those times of reminiscence had the freshness of the dawn when new impressions cross the mind and the grim materialism of life seems far away. He was a great human and had been for years a wide observer and a thoughtful weigher of events and courses. I was always careful not to say anything to divert his pent-up memories or bring him back to his workaday world of patients and medicines. I was sorry, of course, for the waiting-room folks, but he had often told me that their ailments were often imaginary; and that relieved my regrets measurably. He was speaking of his boyhood and I knew some incident lay in his mind from which his mental glow was rising. I waited for him to give it to me, and by and by it came.

“The longer I live,” he was saying, “the more clearly I realize the need of a long look ahead. It is necessary in any profession or business that is worth while, and it is necessary in life.” And then he told me of a day when he wanted to go fishing. He thought the beginning of a perfect day was when he could take his rod and line and a lunch and go where fancy led. He told me of the shady nooks he knew where he could find perch and the eddies where the sunfish flashed in

and out. He spoke of the big trees that reached out across the stream and of the swimming-hole. When he spoke of the swimming-hole he paused and I knew he was back there again. "Everything was so quiet and lovely," he said, "and I liked to hear the birds and watch them flit among the trees." But this day his father wanted him to help on the farm. There were trees to be set out. This was a poor substitute in the boy's mind for a day with hook and line along the brook. During the afternoon when he was tired and the work was irksome he said by way of protest, "Father, why are you setting out these trees? You are old and it will be years before they mature!" Then he told me how his father looked at him a moment and then said: "Son, I am planting these trees for you." In a quiet voice that gave great meaning to his words the doctor continued, "They are my trees now."

That long look ahead has been one big thing that holds the pioneers and prophets and statesmen through the days of toil and confusion. The man who is working for to-morrow never faints under the stress or uncertainty of to-day. How much we owe to the men of the long look ahead! The trees they have planted are ours now. The shade they give comforts us in the heat of the day. The fruit they bear refreshes us. Our Lord did not strive nor cry nor lift up His voice in the street during His trying days, but He planted trees. They are our trees now. One thinks of the statement, "Others have laboured and ye are entered into their labour."

ANOTHER YEAR

IT seems only last midnight since the whistles were screaming out a welcome to the year which has now run its course. In writing that sentence I make confession to being a far traveler on life's way. "A day to childhood seems a year and years like passing ages;" but only to childhood. It no longer seems awkward to write the new figure in the date line; it comes so frequently. The mood of the year is even more changeable. Sometimes it passes your window with splashes of wild rain and again with the mellow light of the setting sun. Spring and summer, autumn and winter follow each other in a variegated procession. We would have the pageant pause when it pleases, but it proceeds with an utter disregard of both our pain and pleasure. I have thought of Time as a mystic river that runs through the continent of life with many tides and eddies, cool nooks and rocky ledges until it blends with the ocean of the years. But how swiftly the river flows and how rapidly the procession passes!

But the rapid flight of the years need not trouble us over much. Years are not the true measure of life. For

"We live in deeds not years: in thoughts not breath;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs! He most lives
Who thinks most, feels noblest, acts best."

In fact years are about the least things to count. The motorist in passing through a country where every prospect pleases does not keep his eyes on the figures on the dial to see how many miles he has traveled. He rather gives himself to enjoyment of the passing scenes. The years mean something, of course, besides figures on the dial, but their value grows less and less as we approach into the precincts of real life.

We need to remember as we go along that life has no second edition. There is no author's privilege to correct the mistakes and beautify the expressions in a second edition. We do not pass this way again. Pasteur was appealing to his students to do their best when he said to them: "And whatever your career may be do not let yourselves become tainted by a depreciating and barren skepticism; do not let yourselves be discouraged by the sadness of certain hours which pass over nations." He was urging scientists to avoid the paralyzing mood in doing the tasks of life. Christians far more than scientists have reason to avoid that mood. We should always remember that our Lord came to be the Saviour not the loser of the world. And He who is incarnate wisdom, love and power said He would always be with us; would never leave us. We judge superficially and skeptically only too often through insufficient information. The sadness of certain hours which pass over nations will not depress us if we keep His light in our eyes. He is the great Author and will readily give us such correction and felicitous expression that there shall be no wish for a second edition.

“NOTHING ELSE COUNTS WITHOUT THAT”

ON a recent evening I left my automobile standing in front of the manse. I had been out calling and it was time for a meeting in the church when I drove up, and I locked the car and went immediately into the church. The meeting drew out to considerable length, for it was a conference, and there were many views of many people and a plan had to be brought out of divergent views. When I went back to my car to put it away for the night the engine surprised me by refusing to start. It had been working all afternoon in its usual efficient way. I used all the means I knew to induce it to go, but it was dead. There is a sense of helplessness comes over one when the engine, the source of power, refuses to go. What is a well built and well equipped car worth if it is without power?

I decided it was time to find out what was the matter before I ruined my battery. Securing a light and some assistance I discovered that the hood was unfastened. When I lifted the hood the distributor was open. A little investigation proved that the rotor was gone. Now the rotor is a little device that spins around in the distributor and carries the electric current to the connections attached to the spark plugs in the cylinders. When the carburetor has filled the cylinder with gasoline vapour and the piston has duly

compressed it, the rotor sends the spark flashing into the vapour to produce the needed explosion. That rotor is a little thing, but it is essential. One of my companions said: "Nothing else counts without that." When he said this I thought of Dr. Patton's definition, following Spinoza, of an essential doctrine: "By the essence of a thing," he said, "I mean that without which the thing, and which itself without the thing can neither be nor be conceived." That automobile looked all right to a passer-by, but it had a lack which rendered it powerless. Some thief had doubtless attempted to steal the car, and finding the lock too much for his ingenuity, had taken the rotor, hoping later to fit it into some other car whose owner had locked his car by removing the rotor.

That experience has recurred to me many times. It brought to me the statement of that great Christian thinker and builder writing to the men of the world, "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It would seem to come within the scope of an essential doctrine in the mind of the Apostle. It also excludes some things sometimes called essential. A man might look like a Christian, be well-mannered and externally correct, and still be without the essential. He is without the spiritual rotor. There is no power. He is out of commission. Some thief has entered the mechanism of his soul and removed or destroyed this essential. Whether or not a man recognizes that his spiritual rotor is gone, every one else does. For if a man cherishes a wrong spirit he is fundamentally wrong. He cannot carry on for Christ.

“ BUT IT’S ONLY A STEP INTO THE DESERT ”

AS I write this we are making our way along the upper reaches of the Eagle River on the Panoramic Special of the Denver and Rio Grande. When I awoke this morning we were in the gorge of the Colorado River. What a turbulent river of mystery it is! It rises in the fastness of the Rocky Mountains and flows nearly all its way through forbidding canyons. From my window I viewed the panorama of sombre rock, formed by the erosion of the ages. It was a narrow gorge, the walls of which rose sheer hundreds of feet. In the early morning light it spoke to me in a language all its own. At the confluence of the Colorado and Eagle we took the gorge of the Eagle River and are following it to Tennessee Pass, which is the top of the continent, the water divide between the Atlantic and Pacific. We have emerged from the canyon and are passing through open spaces. These are walled in by majestic mountains, some of which are snow-capped, giving the impression of gigantic amphitheatres. Some of these open spaces are miles across and some are but miniature recesses from the ruggedness of the mountains. Through it all flows the bright, sparkling water of the Eagle, water born of the eternal snows of the mountains.

We were in the dining car when I called the attention of my companion to the splendid fields of a farm

near which we were passing. There was every evidence of prosperity. All along through these open spaces water had been diverted into irrigating trenches. These fields were beautiful on the background of the desert. It may be they were more beautiful to our eyes because we had been traveling through desert for a thousand miles. "Yes," he replied, "but it's only a step across that trench into the desert." So it was! Just a little field of green enclosed by the flow of water. Beyond the trench was the barrenness of the desert, miles of waste, of sage and cactus! The explanation of the fruitful field was the slender flow of the river whose way was through the vast desert. And one felt like saying, "But what are these waters in the midst of so much desert?" to adapt the words of the disciples about the boy's supply of food.

It was impossible to look at such contrasts from the car window and not have spiritual suggestions beating upon the mind. There was the river of Ezekiel's vision flowing through a land of death. But on this side and that were trees as the mystic waters flowed through the desert. Wherever the waters came there was life and fishermen spread forth their nets. I thought of all this as we sped from open space to pass and on to open space in true panoramic fashion, drawn by our mighty iron steeds up toward the great divide. I thought, too, of the parallel suggested by our Lord that a Christian is the source of streams of living influence following down through any fields that may be desert. But it is always just a step from the fields of life to the waste of the desert.

“NO, BUT I HEARD A GOOD SERMON!”

I WAS having lunch recently with an intimate friend. We were discussing things in a care-free way in a cozy nook in a restaurant a little out of the beaten path. The house by the side of the road is all right; but when you have an hour for friendship a place a bit removed is acceptable. After things had been discussed which were immediately on the surface, I asked him if he had gone to church Sunday. I had reason to believe he had not. After due deliberation he replied, “No, I was not, but I heard a good sermon.” Then he told me that he had arisen later than usual and was not feeling extra well. Instead of occupying his place in the church he had betaken himself to an easy chair; and with a good smoking outfit and a good sermon over the radio had spent the morning. “And,” he said with emphasis, “it was a good sermon.” My friend knows a good sermon.

The radio is a marvel, a scientific wonder. It is sure to affect our civilization profoundly. It is an amazement what the silent sky contains. Just a turn of the dial, a mechanical correspondence to the wave length, and the sky speaks to us. It is not so simple to tune in with the Infinite. It requires less mechanics and more mind and heart. One skilled in listening said, “I will hear what God will speak!” There were desire and will, and submission to God’s

appointment. Wave lengths are not fickle; nor are God's means of expression for those who will hear. Without the quiet power of the current and orderly obedience to truth the radio is as silent as the stars. Listening to God has appointments and the flow of power if we would really hear.

Worship is the going out of our minds and hearts to God and the coming in of His grace. Some there are, perhaps, who can worship God anywhere. But for most of us worship has its essential atmosphere. The sanctuary helps to lift the face to God and the soul out of self. Worship is keeping appointment with God. Such appointment is scarcely kept when one drops into an easy chair and listens in to a sermon. Worship is more fundamental than preaching. The radio is a temptation to omit that which God enjoins. The "listener in" bears no responsibility and adds nothing to help others. He has a receiving set. He contributes nothing. There is no sacrifice, no effort, no concentration of purpose that fits worship. Neglect of the ordinances of God is a vote against them. The Spirit of God was urging great things on the Church and added as a matter of course, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together" in worship. No exception was made for the radio age. The logic of the Christian listening in instead of keeping services would close all churches and commit religion to an entertainment bureau. In which we would all "stand by and wait for the next number." My friend closed his defense of listening in by saying, "I admit it is a mighty poor way to worship."

“WE MUST CUT EXPENSES!”

IT was said with conviction. There was no doubt about that; for he was very much in earnest as we talked about our church work. The expense account was overtaking the income. The treasurer was not sure whether or not he would have funds at the end of the month to pay bills that have a way of accumulating. It is a situation that may or may not be alarming. Out of a lengthening experience I have had worries that kept me awake nights, but how to get funds to meet the necessary expenses of the church has not been one of them. The money is always in sight for intelligent advancement. It may not be in the treasury of the church, but if it is in the possession of loyal members it is to be counted on as really as if it were in the treasury. It can be had for the intelligent asking. The work of the church can be sold to the membership of the church, but it requires salesmanship. On the other hand, my friend and fellow Christian was insisting that the expenses should be limited to the income.

There are two ways of running a church financially. One is to let church affairs drift along and use such funds as come floating in on the wings of good sentiment. This is the policy of many churches. It is a drifting policy and usually down grade. It runs on a belated schedule. The other method is to bring the

income up to meet the needs of the church. The engine that pulls a load carries a head of steam. The church has a commission and is definitely responsible for tasks committed to her. It is her duty to secure such funds as she needs. Her Lord made provision for this in the law of stewardship. By this law what we possess is not ours; it is God's. It provides for large gifts from the well-to-do, not overlooking the small gifts of the poor. Most people are willing to support liberally a forward-looking church. It is easier to get dollars for a church with a real program than dimes for a church that drifts.

Intelligent investment of funds is always justified. Indeed without investment retrogression is inevitable. Certain great facts have emerged in the life of the church that are as sure as any facts can be. The engineer of Los Angeles recently said that unless his city secured more water it would soon not need more water. The city would slump if her needs could not be supplied. Cutting the expense of a church means only too often that it will not long need what it already has. A live church, like a live boy, needs money; neither, if dead, can use it. God never intended that the Church of Christ should be listed in the petty cash account of Christians, or her needs met from incidental expenses. Yet the gifts of many Christians to the church list the church far beneath theatres, movies and other pleasure-giving agencies. What we need is an awakening to the fact that the church is vital, that our church is vital, and being vital is worthy of real support. But it requires salesmanship.

“I HAD NOT BEEN GIVING
INTELLIGENTLY!”

A MEMBER of one of our well-known congregations made such an increase in his contribution to his church that it occasioned comment. He was well-to-do and was counted a generous giver. His pastor called to thank him for the large increase in his gifts. He congratulated his fellow-Christian on the prosperous year that made this increase possible. But the man replied: “There has been no increase in my business. In fact I have not had as good a year as usual. But I discovered that I was not giving intelligently. This appeared to me as I was making out my checks for the month. I have never doubted that my church was more to me than my automobile which I use for pleasure; but my giving did not reflect that fact. My pastor means more to me than my chauffeur, but it is not revealed in my check-book. I could get along without an automobile, but not without the Church. I am ashamed that I have put so low a rating on the value of my church to me, to my children and to my home. I am not more prosperous, but I am trying to square my gifts with my beliefs. Nor will I dispose of my automobile or chauffeur.”

A great Christian truth comes into view in this experience related by one of our leading ministers. It is impossible to escape the logic of the check-book. It

affords conclusive evidence of the rating we give things, the Church among them. It is what a man does that counts; and what he writes in his check-book indicates where his affection lies. It was the realization of this fact that brought about the increase in gifts to the Church of Christ. His pleasure machine and chauffeur rated him as wealthy, but his gift to his church did not reflect his wealth. Whatever his gifts had been they were not proportionately large. Obligation is measured by ability. It is stated by the Apostle, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted for what a man hath, not according to that he hath not." On this basis the Widow's Mite was a princely gift, while that of others, who gave largely, but out of their abundance, shrunk in comparison.

The law of stewardship bears equally upon us all. I have not found anywhere any reservations to its operation upon the small or the great. It is a law that cannot be broken any more than the law of love or the law of gravitation can be broken. Those who violate it are inevitably broken. The Scriptural teaching about giving is that it should be from every one according to his ability; for every cause according to need; presented in worship each week. This is the truth committed to the officers of the church responsible for her success. The task should be made easy by the obligation that rests equally on us all and by the blessings that have spread like sunshine over all life. It should not require any great skill in salesmanship to sell the Church to Christians, the Church for which Christ died.

“WE HAVE BEEN WONDERFULLY BLEST!”

A FEW weeks ago I was passing along one of our city streets. The ash wagons had been along before me and the boxes and cans were strewn about the sidewalk, together with the ashes that had not escaped into the wagons. The snow had gone, but the street was wet. The sun had not appeared in many days and the air was heavy. Everything and everybody were heavy. The avenues of life seemed akin to that street all cluttered with ash-boxes. The work of a pastor often pulls his spiritual temperature down. It is his duty, and privilege as well, to minister to people in trouble; to those whose sky is overcast with some deep shadow. If he escapes the perfunctory in his pastoral ministry, he himself must be ministered to; for he is human. His spirit must be recreated.

The best antidote for a descending spiritual temperature that I know is found here and there in every community. It is a home where the verities of God have been practiced and found true, where the best is yet to be, whatever the past may have been or the future seems to offer. A home like that is like a breath of fresh air to a smothering spirit. It is like a trip to the woods or along a mountain stream. It keeps the spirit from being buried under the ashes of the day and lost like a city of antiquity. A home like that lifts a pastor out of any depression. Whatever he may give

it is a gracious ministry he receives. How a pastor thanks God for an open door into a home where the skyline is far enough beyond the material to include a bit of heaven!

I was making my way to a home where sorrow had come. I was thinking about the aged couple living alone, unable to go to the funeral of a son in a neighbouring city. They were glad to see me; I knew without their telling. "We are getting along fine," he was saying. "We have everything to be thankful for; lots of friends; everything we need. We have been wonderfully blest. Just think of it! Mother and I have lived together more than sixty years and this is the first break. God has been very good to us." Tears coursing down his face did not in any way belie his comfortable words. He was nursing a lame foot that kept him indoors and required a good deal of attention, but he said, "It does not amount to anything. Just think of the blessings we have!" She was agreeing with him and said of her son who was being buried, "He was a good boy; so thoughtful." We had prayer together and I went away with a new appraisal of the Scripture that "godliness with contentment is great gain." I remembered that his father was a member of Ninth Church a hundred years ago and thanked God for the son and his family. When she let me out she offered a gracious apology for what might have seemed discourtesy, "For you know," she said, "I can see just a little." Here was an example of a spiritual fulfillment, "Commit thy way unto the Lord and he shall bring it to pass."

WHERE MEMORY REVERENTLY LOITERS

WHAT a significant day Thanksgiving is! The more we think about it, the deeper the significance grows. The fact that it has stored memory with choicest materials reveals its value. Israel had a day that corresponds to Thanksgiving Day, a day highly prized throughout the land, but the Christian world was long without an annual Thanksgiving Day. One wonders that it should have been so. There were occasional days by occasional people. Three hundred years ago the Pilgrims observed a day of Thanksgiving. Fifty-one out of the one hundred had died during the year. Cold and disease had wrought havoc among them. But the surviving forty-nine buried their dead secretly and obscured the graves to hide their numerical weakness from the Indians. Yet the Governor called for a day of thanksgiving after the harvest of 1621. The story of the Pilgrims who landed on Plymouth Rock in November, 1620, is an oft-repeated tale; but nothing in their history is more illuminating than that first Thanksgiving Day amid their suffering and poverty. These occasional days finally brought in the custom of an annual day of thanksgiving for the nation.

If one has any memory at all, Thanksgiving Day will awaken it. We live the memories over again, forgetting the unpleasant things that have a way of in-

terjecting themselves. At Thanksgiving the first signs of Winter have already come, and yet the glory of Autumn lingers. The trees of the wood are naked, and the orchard is bare and silent. The fallen leaves, noisy and obtrusive since their Summer work is over, rustle in the path or hide in the fence corner from fitful gusts of wind. Harvests for the year are over, and the haze on the horizon is the final gesture of Indian Summer. In our home we never omitted the service in the church in which the thanksgiving spirit was given expression. Then, with it all, the Thanksgiving dinner prepared by mother gave meaning to the blessings of God. The table was lengthened, for we always had guests. Sometimes an additional table was improvised for the younger set. There are many of these days in the past, and memory reverently loiters among them. It would take out of life some of its richest spiritual moments to eliminate Thanksgiving Day.

Perhaps it was something like this the Psalmist had in mind when he said, "It is a good thing to give thanks." It works only good. It banishes the complaining spirit. It forbids the offering of pity to one's self. It keeps the hand strong and the heart clean. It registers appreciation for benefits received. So we are urged at all times, on all occasions, and for everything to give thanks. There were ten lepers healed one day by the Great Physician, redeemed from a living death. But only one had gratitude enough to turn back and give thanks! Do you wonder that our Lord said, "Where are the nine?" Let us not go with the nine.

“ I JUST HAD TO DO IT! ”

WORD had come to me that Paul, my son, had been having trouble with some of the boys of the community. He was small for his twelve years, but quick and muscular and knew how to take care of himself. He was not pugnacious and I was surprised to have the report. Now we were in the library together and the doors were shut, and I asked him to tell me about it. We had been friends and pals from the day of his birth and I felt aggrieved that he had been having such experiences and had not shared them with me. We had recently come into that community and he was the new minister's boy; a most difficult position to hold in a small community. I remember now as I write these lines how he told me in later years that it was not an easy thing to be a Christian and a minister's son in the high school and act the part. Now I was asking him to give an account of his conduct in the new community where we had come to live and work. In a straightforward way he told me of jeers and taunts and of his fruitless attempts to be friendly. He had finally met the boys on their own ground and literally fought it out. He looked at me with his fine brown eyes and said, “ I just had to do it! ”

As I listened to him and looked into his face, I realized that he was not ashamed of his father or his

father's profession; that he was manfully paying the price of being a minister's son. Whatever mistakes he had made were of judgment, not of motive. I was conscious that the danger hour for him was past. He had burned his bridges. I was not proud of his method of spiritual victory, but the fact was evident that he was spiritually in the open. He had no further trouble with the boys and was accepted on his own rating. He made his way in school with honour and when he died in his senior year in the high school was among the few best and was in preparation for the Gospel ministry. He fought no harder battles than those under the taunts of his twelfth year, after which he defended himself to a sympathetic father by saying, “I just had to do it!”

I have found myself thinking of that scene many times and turning his reasoning over in my mind. Every father with a high ideal sets one also for his son and thereby puts a great burden upon his soul. The son may accept the high ideal and the burden or slink away from both. There is a great human truth here that emerges in life. A recent magazine article called attention to it by showing that the homes of ministers produced more than twenty-eight times as many notables as the average American home. The same law operates for any Christian, who openly and unflinchingly carries the banner of Christ. The lad got something from me that day when I had him on the carpet, but he gave me much in return. I realized anew how a son might be more strength than “arrows in the hand.”

"NO ONE EVER TAUGHT ME"

WHEN a pastor goes out for the afternoon's work among his people he never knows what may turn up. His experiences are as varied as human life and he seldom has warning of problems that rise up before him. Only the other day a man confronted me with the whole problem of religious education. I had dropped in to see him and he closed his office door, saying he had some questions to ask me. These proved to be questions of church history, the answers to which should have been a part of his early training. Every boy raised in a Christian home, and he was, should know the facts about which he was asking. Every member of the church, and he is, should know the elemental facts of church history. But my friend had scant information about church history in the New Testament and how the Church of to-day connects with the Church in the New Testament. Yet he was raised in the church and went to Sunday School. "No one ever taught me," he said, "about our Protestant Church." Such information as he had came to him through the public school.

As we talked things over I thought of those Sunday afternoons in my father's house. No one can teach like a mother, for her position is one of splendid vantage. It is hers to rule over the thoughts of childhood and youth. She is God's appointment as teacher to

her child. In her own way mother taught us that story reading from the Scriptures and commenting or answering questions. She was untrained so far as schools are concerned, but as I think of it now I marvel at her information. She knew the story of the Church in the New Testament and the period following. She understood the usurpation of the pastor at Rome. She knew about Luther in Germany, Knox in Scotland and Calvin in France. That intricate, yet simple story was given us on Sunday afternoons in some quiet corner. There were many questions she could not answer, but the lines of development she knew. From her, more than from college or seminary, I received my fundamentals. In a quiet and humble way she was fulfilling her mission as a teacher in the most essential of all schools, the home!

But now the home is failing as a school of religious education. The teachers have resigned, being too busy with other things. The pupils have abandoned the school for other occupations on Sunday afternoon. The Church has awakened to the situation and is trying to do the work of the home and the Church as well, but it is foredoomed to failure. The work of the Church must be built on the work of the home. To meet the situation our educators have prepared a curriculum which unfolds not only Christian doctrine, but church history as well. It reveals the facts about the Reformation and explains who we are and why! But what can the Church do with this problem in twenty minutes a week—the problem given to the Christian home? The problem given to the home with mother as a teacher!

“HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN THERE?”

WE were standing on the bank of Crystal Lake in the Franconia Notch of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. It was a beautiful day in summer and the quiet water of this mountain lake reflected the trees and mountains in perfect outline and colour. There are few places I have known that hold more fascination than the bank of this little lake. It was loved by the Red Men who called it the “Beautiful Highland Water.” The stately mountains around are covered with rich foliage except here and there where great areas of granite appear. But the fascination of that spot is not due chiefly to the beautiful lake with the mountains mirrored in its bosom. All eyes were upon a high cliff across the lake. There near the top of the mountain, silhouetted against the western sky in austere grandeur, was a great stone face, “The Old Man of the Mountain.” Multitudes come and look upon that rough-hewn face only to return to look again. The mighty hand of Nature with convulsion and storm, heat and cold, has wrought the great Stone Face in granite. Storms are riven upon it. Winter smothers his features in snow. But none of these things affect his sentinel-like watch.

While we were standing there, with people from everywhere, a little girl who had been looking with rapt interest turned to her mother and said, “Mother,

how long has he been there?" How long? It takes only a suggestion of that sort to lift one out of himself and make him realize with Jacob how "few and evil" are the years of life. If not evil, then indeed few! "God only knows how long," I said to her, answering absent-mindedly the question addressed to her mother. But surely before God walked with Adam in the Garden in the cool of the evening that great silent face looked out over the ranges to the south. He has been the inanimate contemporary of all generations. The nearer stars of the Milky Way, whose twinkled light started toward our earth when Abraham was a citizen of Ur of the Chaldæans, is only now reaching us, having traveled at the unthinkable speed of 186,000 miles every second of the intervening centuries. That Stone Face was there then and is now! How long? Long enough, perhaps, to receive light messages from the remote ends of the universe. It came over me anew as we stood there amid the glory of the New Hampshire mountains with the child's question lingering in mind that life is indeed but a span.

But another thought came, too. That Stone Face is not forever. Granite is not eternal. Some mighty effacer will one tragic day wipe that stern profile from the western sky. Things which are seen are temporal even though made of granite and framed high on the shoulder of the mountain. The spiritual only is eternal. It was good to remember that He who understood His Lord best said, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." That is more than can be said of the cold stone profile done in granite.

“HIS LEAF ALSO SHALL NOT WITHER ”

WE have in our membership a man whom I esteem as one of the first citizens of our city. He is entitled to this rating, I believe, on many counts, but more particularly on the sheer weight of his personality. He is a successful man in business and has made a name for himself in our town; but nothing he has done measures up to what he himself is. It was a fine thing a son said not long ago to his father, “When I am your age I want to be like you.” My friend and parishioner is a model which any boy or man might follow with profit. He arose from the position of an obscure employee, a lad from Erin, to the ownership of the business which he has made the leading business of its sort in the city. There are men whose worth marks them among their fellows, whose wisdom gives them leadership. How much the Church owes to the influence and leadership of such men!

Most men lose their happy ways and pleasant words when they grow old, but it is not so with my beloved parishioner, who has a smile and a cheery word for every one. He is following the policy of Rabbi Ben Ezra in growing old with his face turned to the future and with a song in his heart. Bacon says that men of age object too much and venture too little. But my friend makes neither mistake. He has grown old in years, but not in spirit. His days have not come into

the yellow leaf, notwithstanding the season. It is worth anybody's hour on a busy afternoon to hear him say, "I'm glad to see you! Won't you sit down?" It is not a perfunctory word, but it rises out of his genial heart as the light rises from the dawn. He is not one who talks of the good old days with longing. He is not riding backward in the chariot of time, but is enjoying the scenery as he goes along. He is interested in things of the day. No sooner are you seated than he asks, "Is there anything new?" With remarkable precision he appraises the things of to-day by to-day's standards.

He said to me quite recently, "I am not much good any more!" He had some ailment incident to his age. But as I looked into his fine features and listened to his helpful words I felt I had never known any one whom I could appraise more highly just for naked human values. I have always felt I got more from him on my visits than I gave to him. And last week he had a birthday. He was eighty-nine years old and I forgot all about it. I did not send him any token of my good will; not even a card expressing my affection for him. I awoke too late to poignant regrets. He does not seem to mind and waves the omission aside with a smile. It is great any time to have an understanding and a generous heart, but especially so in age. No spring or summer beauty in life can exceed that of a true human autumn. How rich and glorious its colours are! The regal quality of a man grown old in goodness as expressed in Scripture finds occasional examples in life. The head of the aged is a crown of glory if found in the way of righteousness.

“I'D BE TERRIBLY IN THE HOLE ”

WE were sitting together in my study and the hour had grown late. He had a habit of coming in after his evening work was done, even though he knew mine was not. He was the principal of the village school and I was a village pastor. I often find myself turning to those days in the little town when I could visit all my people in a week and accept all the invitations that came. I did not realize it then, but those were halcyon days and I now think of that village with affectionate longing. Occasionally a new family came and once or twice in my pastorate I lost one. This school teacher and I were intimate friends and that friendship has never had an interruption. There was often a plate for him on our table for he was alone. One summer we took an extended vacation trip on bicycles, going far north into Canada and covering over a thousand miles. I have gone far afield many times since, but no trip ever offered such a variety of experiences as that. How often a kindly Providence intervened in our behalf!

But this night we were talking seriously of a question that would not be put aside. There was a parting of the ways and choice had to be made. He was a good teacher and might have spent his life in that profession as he had planned. But there was “a voice as bad as conscience” calling him into the service of

Christ and the Church. It would not be quiet. He had qualifications, too, that made the case stronger. On the other hand, he had only a normal school education. It would take four years in college and three in the seminary to fit him for the ministry to which this voice was calling him. Already well out of his teens, seven years seemed a long look ahead. Then he was dependent on himself and no one was offering to help him through these additional years of preparation. So he sat with his chin in his hand looking dejectedly at some circles he was drawing upon a sheet of paper on my desk, as the oil in my lamp sunk lower and the night grew darkly silent.

Looking up he said, "I would be terribly in the hole at the end of my training." He was thinking of debts incurred and years lost. Yet he declared his conviction that God was calling him to this service. When I suggested that it was God's way never to lift any one out of a hole until one gets into it through obedience to Him, he looked up with a grim sort of smile and said, "That settles it!" He went to college and seminary and spent the seven years. He often wrote me that he was in a "bad hole." But to-day he is in the forefront of the missionary work in Chosen and few have rendered a larger service than he is rendering. Our Lord often sends His friends across the water upon which He knows the storm will come. But when they are at their wit's end doing what He asks, He comes walking on the sea. And David said something about being lifted out of a fearful pit. It is a truth for men and churches.

"HOME FOR SUPPER!"

WE were making our way across the open plains of northern Missouri on one of those great trains from Chicago to the Pacific coast. It was a bright morning in the early summer and vision seemed limited only by the horizon. Having turned in early the night before, I was up early and was enjoying the beautiful morning and the passing landscape. I was on an annual pilgrimage to see my parents, a custom I kept up while they lived. I was thinking of them as the great train sped along its iron way. And scenes through memory's window vied with the scenes passing the car window in claiming my attention. Such an occasion is an opportunity for the past to relive. This morning the horn of memory was sounding through the valleys of my past. What troops kept coming in response to that call! Some were good to look upon and some I would that they had remained beyond memory's horizon. I wondered, as I looked upon some of the scenes envisaged for me by memory, where my good sense was when that particular reel in my life was taken. How impartial memory is in bringing up the past from the shadows! One may cheat himself into forgetfulness, but eventually memory will call to the silent past and it returns to your astonished eyes.

I remembered this morning that my parents did not know I was on my way west. Securing a blank I wrote

a message of a single sentence, "I will be home for supper," and signed my name. I read it many times while waiting for a station at which it might be put on the wire. The significance of it made an impression that memory has held. When the train stopped at the little town in the late afternoon, my father was there to meet me and mother had supper ready at the old home. And mother knew what to prepare and how to prepare it. It was the beginning of a few happy days. Cares and problems were laid aside for the higher ministries of life. What a time it was for living the things in common, for genuine communion of spirit. It gave me an opportunity to express my gratitude to them for ministries that had never been numbered. It gave them an opportunity to voice their affection. When those days came to an end I was stronger for my tasks and life was richer and more worth living.

As our communion service approached I thought of that experience years ago and of that message, "I will be home for supper!" Here is a table prepared by the Hands of a thousand ministries, Hands that were pierced. Here is a table that satisfies the deepest hunger and thirst. There are few embellishments on this table, but an abundant supply for all needs. Here is the remedy for undefined longings, any homesickness of the soul; for here we are at home with the heavenly Father. Here we have things in common with God. It looks on to the feast in the Kingdom when we will finally, as a reunited family, gather in the Father's house. Why not send word on to gladden the heart of God, "I will be home for supper"?

“ THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK ”

HOW pleasant it is to spread your lunch in the out-of-doors! All ordinary adornments of the table are omitted. Fine linen and fine silver are left at home for the more artificial life. Nature herself provides the adornments; the open sky in which clouds of fantasy idle or gambol, the wide-spreading tree or the majestic flow of the river. And if you wait long enough the miracle of the sunset will be shown in the west and God will hang the evening star in the blush of the fading day. You may witness the indescribable spectacle of the drawing of the silent veil of night. The quiet music of the leaves charms away the weariness of the spirit; or the ripple of the brook soothes nerves jangled by the tumult of the city. Many retreats I have found in our beautiful out-of-doors. Little sanctuaries apart, yet not far removed from the beaten highway. There is the Big Spring, the Oak Tree, the glen with the brook filled with boulders, not to speak of Valley Forge, the Brandywine and the banks of our beautiful Delaware.

One place and one occasion stand out as different from all others. There was nothing bucolic, nothing suggestive of rest. Eleven of us had gone out for the day, not in automobiles or trolleys, but on mules. We were visitors at the Grand Canyon, that gigantic wonder of Arizona. Our destination was the Colorado

River at the bottom of the canyon and our route was the Bright Angel Trail. It is a beautiful and suggestive name, but I have wondered if it were not given by way of contrast. Some angles, some dizzy heights, some precipitous descents suggested rather a trail of the Rocky Mountain Sheep. Jacob's Ladder, a section of the trail, was too steep and the angles too sharp to ask the mules to carry us down, so we walked, if what we did could be called walking. Three thousand feet down was a bit of a plain and then the trail wound around the Devil's Corkscrew to the river. This was a path chipped out of the granite mountainside. Leaving our mules we walked across a sandy plot to the swift, silt-laden river rushing through this mighty chasm two hundred miles long. I thought of Naaman who preferred the beautiful rivers of Damascus to the muddy Jordan as I compared this yellow stream to the rivers of Pennsylvania. Still as I beheld that river of mountains and of mystery, I was fascinated.

Our guide led us back a hundred yards out of that inferno of heat to the foot of a great rock. In its shadow there was comfort. Presently our lunch was spread in perhaps the strangest out-of-doors on earth. The rock under which we found shelter from the heat arose sheer hundreds of feet. We were at the bottom of an abyss a mile deep. On every hand it lifted its stupendous forms in deathlike silence. No birds or grass! Only sun and wind and water. But as I lay under that rock with its refreshing shadow I thought of Him of whom the prophet spoke as "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

“REALLY, GOD IS SO ELUSIVE”

I AM wondering if a great many good Christian people would not agree with the statement of my companion concerning God. Many seek God in times of need only to fail apparently to locate even His residence. The Psalmist declared that he could not escape the presence of God on the wings of the morning. The uttermost part of the sea, that wild waste of water where the good mate thought that even the winds were lost, held for him the presence of God. With most of us it is different. My companion of the afternoon was a good Christian woman. She was not arguing, not trying to convince me or herself. She was in a retrospective mood and the past kept returning. Things had not been well ordered it seemed in her life. Her mother had died when she stood in the greatest need of guidance. Life had been hard and hope had often taken wings. In every time of sorrow or trial God seemed quite beyond the horizon.

We were having a pleasant afternoon in the open. The summer was on the way. The earth seemed fully awake to new life. I had quoted a line of Carruth's great poem on "Every man in his own tongue," when she said, "Yes, that is all true, but really God is so elusive." Evidences of God were all about us. The trees of the wood were in their fullest foliage. The flowers were beautiful and fragrant. Near by a brook

tumbled over a little falls noisily and hurried on to the river and sea, from which the sky had borrowed it for a season of service. Clouds idled across the deep blue as if released for an afternoon from duty. A cardinal spoke cheerily from a clump of bushes near by. He had wintered safely in the South and was back with us for a part of the summer. A cultivated field lay in the valley and a garden at the foot of the hill. Evidences were these of God, samples of His craftsmanship. But more striking than any of these was her own gracious life of service, her own refined, patient humanity. As clearly as the footprint in the sand indicated a traveler, her own life indicated God. Yet amid it all she was saying, "God is so elusive."

Perhaps we look too far to find God and try too hard to understand Him. Perhaps we prescribe forms for God to take or a language for Him to speak. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable; we are in the flesh, finite, mortal. But God is not far from us, as Paul told the Grecians who were looking far and wide for Him. Eternal mystery abides in God, but Christ came to us along the paths of human life. We cannot understand God, but we can understand Christ. We cannot see God, but Jesus could not and cannot be hid. And when we have seen Him we have seen God. He was in Christ among men. He drops a tear with us in our sorrow. He works with us at our task. He walks with us in the wood. He has things in common with the rich and poor, with the suffering and the rejoicing. God in Christ is never elusive. Nor is He ever too far away to hear.

“WHO IS THIS?”

A VISITOR had come out of Galilee to a modest home in Bethany in the late afternoon on Friday. It was perhaps March thirty-first. Doubtless the people of the Bethany home were expecting him, for there was great affection between the Galilean and this home. Here he could have the rest in seclusion and friendship he so much needed. It was his plan to spend the Sabbath evening and the ensuing Sabbath day in this home now so well known the world around. There was much for them to talk over. They did not know, but he knew, that such occasions were drawing rapidly to a close. As the evening passed he told them something of what had happened in Galilee and something of what was to come to pass in the city. As he talked they followed with rapt interest. Lazarus, so recently rescued from the shades of death, could only wonder who his redeemer might be. Martha, who served him so gladly, and Mary, who hung on his words, wondered as he spoke of things which must needs be. The paschal moon flooded the little village with glorious light as the Sabbath evening passed. Some sort of spiritual realization came to Mary and led her to break the vase of precious nard to anoint the feet of him who had come to them. The fragrance of that hour still lingers in the world.

Sunday morning the quiet seclusion was at an end.

A week of tragic events was at hand. Leaving the Bethany home he sent two of his friends on ahead to secure for him a colt, which they did and brought to him. Mounted on this colt he made his way to the Holy City, some disciples going before, some following. Many pilgrims from all the land joined the company. The Galilean had assumed the rôle of Spiritual King spoken of by the prophet. The people sensed it and began to shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Word flew to the city and people streamed out to meet the procession. They carpeted his way with their garments. They strewed palms before him. He was definitely claiming Messiahship and they were as definitely ascribing it to him. So he approached the city, and, passing through the streets, entered the Temple.

This visitor from Galilee threw the whole city into confusion. He had been appraised and assigned his place. But now that appraisal seemed to be called in question. The student looked out of his window as the procession went by to ask over again, "Who is this?" The Scribe, the Pharisee, the Sadducee, the Herodians, and the stolid Roman set aside the former estimate to make a new inquiry. All knew who he was, yet all were asking, "Who is this?" Jerusalem allowed her baser self to answer; and the answer was fatally wrong. So does He enter the city of the human soul; for there is a Palm Sunday in every life. May you find it in your heart to let your better self give answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and opening the gates, bid Him enter. So will He rule in strength and beauty.

NEW HEELS ON OLD PAVEMENTS

I RECENTLY bought a new pair of shoes, which is not so much to speak about, but this pair had a new idea in heels. I am not saying the idea was not right, but it did not work well for me. I missed the old-fashioned comfort on the pavements. It isn't good to be conscious of your step, notwithstanding the good advice posted in public places about watching it. If you are thinking about your shoes as you walk any other mental activity is forestalled. Walking is relegated in normal life to the automatic; it is an important function unconsciously performed. But these shoes of mine spoiled the plan. I therefore went to my shoemaker and asked him to remove the new idea and install the old. I found him sympathetic. He knew what I meant although I had not sufficient vocabulary to explain fully. It is astonishing how many dialects one has to speak to avoid clumsy circumlocution. I have been wearing shoes a long time, but I found I did not have the proper words to talk intelligently about my wants to my shoemaker. But he knew enough to make up for my deficiency.

He has a good shop filled with all kinds of machines. There are wheels of various kinds that run with incredible speed at his will. How different it is from the shop I used to frequent as a boy! That one was littered with scraps of leather and old shoes. The

equipment was a worn knife or two, some awls, bristles, a hammer and a queer little vise that held the shoe tightly to the shoemaker's knee while he made the desired repairs. But my shoemaker is no ordinary mender of shoes. When he pulled off that new-fangled heel I was surprised to find the inside leather fiberless. He explained to me that it often happened that way. "The trouble is," he said, "there are lots of people making leather who do not know leather; and just as many making shoes that do not know shoes. I have tried to know both leather and shoes and I dearly love my work. It requires both science and art to make a good shoe." Picking up an insole he continued, "See this! It has the curve of the human foot!" But after I had studied his diagrams and drawings of shoes, diagrams built geometrically, I began to realize how little I knew about shoes.

As I left the shop with a pair of heels that served me without requiring the attention, like a spoiled child, of all those present, I had new impressions and evaluations of the shoemaker's world. He made no pretense at knowing any other world than his own, but he made his own worth while, a world worth living in. Life is too short for us to know much about more than one realm. And a little learning in any realm is a dangerous thing. That a man knows shoes does not qualify him to speak of stars. I discovered my knowledge of church history did not qualify me to speak of shoes. And I remembered that Jesus said, "The Son of man gave to every man his work." And herein lies a great truth for us all!

FLYING INTO NEUTRAL

I WAS making my way recently to board a street car to go across town. My machine being up for repair, I was falling back on the public utility. But I did not carry out my purpose for a friend who was going my way picked me up. At least he said he was going my way, after the manner of men who are willing to show a kindness, and delivered me at my destination. I was glad to hear his friendly, "Which way?" for I was already behind my schedule and I had visions of an increasing deficit. So I took my place beside him in the front seat of his car with a sense of relief and gratitude.

As we went along the street, I observed something out of the ordinary in my friend's driving. When he gave the engine gas he pulled back on the gear-shift lever. And in getting the car under way or in going up grade he held firmly to it. It struck me that he was giving that lever unusual attention, and his problem with it constituted a good deal of a handicap in the management of the car. His hand was occupied there even when we were going at full speed. My curiosity was aroused and I finally said to him, "Why do you hold to that lever while you are driving?" I will not forget his answer. In an apologetic way he said: "This engine will fly into neutral when it has a load to pull if I do not hold it in gear." So his strong

right hand was occupied in holding the engine at its task. It must also have taken a good deal of his attention. Driving, like walking, must be done automatically and the attention released for observation. But how can either be done automatically if one has not learned to walk or if the engine flies into neutral?

I was grateful for the ride and for the lesson of the engine. Truth, like gold, usually comes in common, unpolished setting. Sham and pretense need a gorgeous array, veneer, banners and gilt; truth arrives quietly and humbly. I said to him, "That engine of yours is wonderfully human! It does what most folks do when the load is vexatious or galling." Something has damaged the moral mechanism and human energy has a constant tendency to fly into neutral. As I went on my way I thought of how our Lord had to hold His disciples in gear; how He still has to hold us in gear. I thought of how they quit their task when it was irksome; and discipleship still does. It is no reflection on an engine for it to stall when overloaded, but something is wrong when it flies into neutral. Nor is it any reflection for a man to sink down under his load; but when he flies into neutral his moral mechanism is out of order. Such an engine can never fulfill its mission; nor can such a disciple. He who stays in moral gear will reach the haven and have the plaudit, "Well done." When Jonah's task seemed hard and galling he took ship for Tarshish. He found ease in a quiet place in the dark hold, but it was a mistake. It is still a mistake!

“AFTERWARDS THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL ”

FEW of those who visit Yosemite know anything of what lies beyond in the high Sierras. The train takes you to El Portal and the bus travels the wonderful remaining miles to the floor of the valley. If you go beyond, it is at a price. We paid the price and took the trip out to Lake Merced, lying high among the mountains near the source of the river. Travel is by mule train; the alternative is to walk. The silvery little river gets into the valley by innumerable rapids and by two enormous leaps over Vernal and Nevada Falls. The trail makes its precarious way back and forth along the face of the mountain until it reaches the rim. What a sight the valley offers from this eminence! It can never be forgotten. Our way led us through little Yosemite, a quiet, lovely vale. It skirted the edge of the mountain through majestic timber. It was an exhilarating ride this early August morning; for August is a fall month in the Sierras. At times our trail led us across a field of solid granite. Again we were in an enchanting glen. Occasionally we came out along the foaming waters or the quiet pools of the river. Always before us Mt. Lyal lifted his rocky summit, a mass of jumbled rock, 13,281 feet high. We reached the camp at Lake Merced in the early evening. All about us were the majestic mountains and the primeval forests. And the world of affairs seemed far removed.

We complain at the ruthlessness of the lumberman. He spares not the tree. In the forest he thinks in terms of lumber. Into these woods no lumberman had ever brought a saw. Yet there was evidence on every hand of an amazing ruthlessness. Nature was at work and none of her chips had been cleared away, no design obscured. Nature would seem to think of trees in terms of mould. How everlasting the giant trees appeared, yet everywhere in the forest were mounds of mould where some monarch had sunk down; its form being reduced to soil. Nature goes lumbering, only she makes soil of every leaf and twig and of the sturdy fibre. I stood beside a fallen monarch upon whose form the elements had made scanty headway, but near by was a great pile of mould, prophetic of all trees. From the soil so richly fertilized grew a beautiful aspiring cedar. I walked through a vale standing thick with tamarack, cedar and the lesser breeds, but I observed that the soil on which I walked was mould. All the trees that lifted their forms were as nothing to those which had crumbled into the soil.

It is the way of things natural—God's way of building. It has a depressing influence if one goes no farther. What is man, or what is a tree? But if thought lifts and the horizon goes back we remember that we are not carnal, but spiritual. The body is the house loaned for the days. Death is radical indeed to flesh and to trees, but to the spirit it is an incident. "Afterwards that which is spiritual," saith the Scriptures concerning the body.

SEEMING OR REALITY?

NOT so long ago I boarded one of those palatial trains at Kansas City headed for Chicago, or at least I thought it was. It had an observation car with an illuminated name on the rear. There is something fascinating about swinging through the night on a train known as the Apache or the Navajo or the Missionary. I noticed that my berth was on the right side of the car, and I liked that; for trains whizzing by, and by which we whiz, with clanging bell and grinding and singing wheels and roaring engine are on the other side of the car. It is really alarming to have all the noise of two great trains thrown into your window at short range. It disturbs all but the most confirmed sleepers. So I was glad to be on the right, regretting, I hope, that any one had to sleep on the left. Proceeding to bed and to sleep, I was dozing in those first delightful moments when a big freight engine emitted its pent-up energy in explosive blasts, trailing a heavy train after it. I was surprised, for it was on my side; and further surprised to discover that we were running west. I wondered if I had gotten aboard the wrong train, but was reassured in remembering that the conductor had accepted my ticket which was for Chicago. I further observed that we were running on the right-hand track and must be going east, for only one road in America now follows the English way of using the

left. It finally came to me that my train had turned after leaving the station for Chicago.

All this resulted from getting a wrong start and a false mental attitude. It came to me that this is an experience in more places than on Pullman trains. A wrong mental attitude is always clashing with facts. You expect what does not come. You meet up with surprises and disappointments for which you are not prepared. It is aptly expressed by the phrase, "turned in the head." The points of the compass and what you think are the points of the compass are not in accord. If I could have had my way I would have reversed the course of that train, and morning would have found us far out on the plains of Kansas or wrecked. But the control of that train was not invested in the hand of a sleepy passenger. The man who guided it was wide awake and following the open way of the semaphores and the instruction of his written orders.

In so many ways life is like my experience that confused night. There are "ways that seemeth right unto a man," and if he could he would guide life into the ways of seeming. Peter felt his Lord was taking the wrong course at the Springs of the Jordan and reached for control, but he was thrust aside by our Lord. My train was going right. It brought me to Chicago as it had engaged to do; and when the full light of the morning came upon the land I found my mental attitude changing to conform to the facts. I had not understood adequately the way out. I have often been thankful for a guide whom I could trust when I could not see the way or always the reason for the way.

THE MULE THAT WOULDN'T BACK

WE had a team of mules on the farm in my boyhood days. As mules go, our team was about all that could be desired. They were big and sturdy and willing to work. In a new country mules are all but indispensable. The sod must be "broken," if it is prairie land, as ours was. Buildings must be erected and roads opened. Others have laboured, in established communities, and we enter into the possession of homes and fields and roads. But the pioneer builds his own house, opens his own roads and subdues his own fields. In this work our team of sturdy mules rendered excellent service.

But one of these fellows, Jack we called him, with all his good qualities had one trait that marred his otherwise excellent record. He wouldn't back. He could not be persuaded or forced to back. He was enormously strong and I have seen him break many a "double-tree" when he and his mate put their strength to a heavy load. He was willing to work. Long hours did not seem to matter. He was valiant on the tongue of a "self-binder." But back he would not. If you pulled your load a little too far, or entered a place the only way out of which was to back, you were in trouble. He was very much like an automobile without any reverse gear shift. Whether he was ignorant or deficient in his make-up or simply stubborn I do

not pretend to know. He would have been a much more comfortable mule to live with if he had understood and practiced the art of backing. The substitution of his mule-intelligence made many simple situations complex and created delays and frictions in the day's work.

But Jack taught me an important lesson. There are occasions when the wise way out is to retrace your steps. When one is wrong or has gone too far, it is best to back. It takes grace and a trained will to do it. Nor is it a sign of weakness; rather it is a token of strength. It never excites contempt; rather does it elicit praise. Successful men have always been ready to retrace their steps or reverse their policy. Theodore Roosevelt was once upbraided by a politician for changing his policy. He replied that he always held it to be his right to change when he discovered he was wrong. It is a passing fault to go too far or say too much, but the fault is made permanent by a refusal to retrace the steps or recall the words. Jesus gave evidence of His Messiahship in the synagogue, evidence that was indisputable. He had a right to expect kindness. But instead He looked into hard faces reflecting wills that would not change. The record is that He looked upon them with anger. And I have thought of Saul, the son of Kish, who wouldn't retrace his way, and of David, who was full of mistakes, but always ready to turn back when he was wrong. Even the best of men find themselves in wrong positions or upholding wrong opinions. But true men and strong hasten to turn back when once they discover the fact.

WE ARE ENTERED INTO THEIR LABOUR

PERHAPS it was the approach of Memorial Day that inclined me recently to drive out to Valley Forge. That place of heroic service has taken to itself the spirit of sacrificial patriotism. It is to the understanding a holy place, made sacred by the suffering of men who would not yield, from whom hardship exacted the last penalty that could be exacted in life or death. What a place of beauty it is; the wide valleys and the wooded hills! The rhododendron brightens the woods and the wild flowers add splashes of colour to the fields. Valley Forge is more than a place; it has caught into its name the spirit of devotion to holy service. Great trees are now growing on the breastworks, but the investment of that day has not failed.

I went up to the arch erected by Congress, so located that it dominates the landscape. It is a good place to linger. In a striking way that arch gathers into itself the throbbing truths of Valley Forge. Washington's eulogy of his men is in a great stone panel: "Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery." Beneath is the Scripture, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." In bronze are the stately words of Henry Arnitt Brown, "And here in this place of sacrifice, in this vale of humiliation, in this valley

of the shadow of that death out of which the life of America rose regenerate and free, let us believe with an abiding faith that to them union will seem as dear and liberty as sweet and progress as glorious as they were to our fathers and are to you and me; and that the institutions which have made us happy, preserved by the virtue of our children, shall bless the remotest generations of the time to come."

As I stood by that beautiful arch and read again and again the words of Washington, uttered in praise of his ragged, starving army, my heart burned within me. I thought of the institutions that have grown great through their investment of blood and spirit. I thought of the savage criticism, of the political intrigue with which Washington had to contend. But these men have not stood alone. Generations following have worthily underwritten their work. While I stood by that arch and thought, the hills of Valley Forge seemed to dissolve and another scene arose; a little company of men gathered by the side of a fallen companion. None of the men were under seventy years of age. The chaplain was reading and I could hear the solemn words, "The march of another comrade is over." It had been a long march with heavy duties and many hardships. It had taken him to Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. He had lain tentless under the stars on the field of battle. "As he was then," the chaplain continued, "so he is still in the hands of the heavenly Father." I found myself wondering whether we of this generation were worthily taking up the task the men of Valley Forge and the men of Gettysburg laid down!

“ I WONDER WHY? ”

FROM the Mount of Happiness to the Vale of Suffering the pastor's path often makes sharp descent. It may be only the width of the street between these otherwise widely separated areas. It is the responsibility of the pastor to minister daily in the Gospel to these at opposite poles in the realm of life. It is when he enters the dimly lighted room of suffering that many questions arise not easily parried or answered. I remember an occasion at the bedside of a Christian woman. She had suffered long, and pain was at home in her body. She had from childhood been a Christian and had given herself, Dorcas-like, to good deeds. Her marked talents had been given to help along many good causes. But now she was crushed under the heavy hand of suffering. Like Paul, she had asked God to remove the thorn in the flesh; but the thorn remained and she suffered on. It seemed such a strange way for the Master to use His skilled workmen. She had evidently been thinking of this, for she turned to me with the question, “ I wonder why? ”

How often I have met that question in various midnight hours! I have heard it from people who have tried and seem to have failed. I have heard it from mothers who have given sacrificial service and received in return ingratitude. I have heard it from benefactors who have watched their benefactions dissolve and ap-

parently go for naught. It was the question of Job as he sat in sorrow on the ash-heap through those seven days of silence. And yet it is strangely true that suffering has a way of bringing its own blessing.

Life is exceedingly complex and it is difficult to think things through to right conclusions. Perhaps that is why we have an Example to follow. The scientist seeks by every means to safeguard against complications that vitiate conclusions. In matters of life we should be even more careful. We are spiritual beings, living in a spiritual world; moral beings in a moral world; intellectual beings in an intellectual world; physical beings in a physical world; business men and women living in a commercial world. We are all this and more. A man may be ever so good a Christian and still be inefficient in the commercial world. One may be called on to follow a path of suffering in the physical world, due to physical defects, without any shadow being cast on the spiritual life. Sometimes, for a great moral purpose, God extends His hand of healing; but more often He comes to walk with His suffering children and to say as He said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And by and by the fashion of this world is changed, its forms dissolve and the wise and simple, the rich and poor find a common level. And pain loses its power to hurt as mortality dissolves into life. I always remember in the presence of suffering that Jesus said: "The servant is not above his Lord." With a heart that wondered sometimes, He followed the path of suffering to a glorious day.

“TAKE THE BLINDERS OFF ”

THE training of high-grade horses requires both patience and skill. A bungling trainer may easily ruin a spirited horse by a single mistake. Fright, loss of confidence and wrong impressions must be studiously avoided. I used to visit the farm of Powell Brothers, famed for its fine and well-trained animals. Young horses must be accustomed to the things of the wide world and the open road before they can be sent out to serve. It is not enough that they know the life of the quiet valley in which they were raised. I have seen the men overcoming the fear of a puffing, clanging engine, normal in the mind of a spirited horse. It is a process of education to teach these fine young creatures that there is nothing in all the noise and bluster of a passing train to hurt them. A good trainer wants his horse to understand. One day a man was having trouble with his team and another and more experienced trainer said: “Take the blinders off your horses if you want to quiet them.”

I have often thought of that remark in connection with the home training of young people. The home fits young people for the wide world and the open road. No college course can take the place of home training. There are those who discount the education of women, who seem willing to thrust them in as teachers in the most fundamental and important of all schools

without equipment. The problem of fitting boys and girls for life is vastly more important as well as more difficult than to fit horses. The mothers of men, above all teachers, should be trained. To put blinders on the minds and hearts of young people is an easy way to meet the problem; but it is a foolish and hurtful way. Sooner or later the blinders will fail to shut out confusing things. Then the youth feels he has been deceived, and he has a tendency to throw over all restraint. It is better to take your boy's hand in yours and with him face the noisy engines and the subtle deceptions of life.

There is a great hue and cry against the colleges of our day. Without defending the colleges, which are not different from the colleges of all time, I want to lay the primary failure in the home. The boy well nurtured in the home is prepared to enter the battle of ideas and ideals always going on in any and every college. How could it be otherwise as long as a college is a college? When the home has done its part there is little danger lurking anywhere in a college course for young people. But of course a real college takes any blinders off. And some homes teach things that must be challenged as soon as a son passes the garden gate. With the fall of the structure of home training life's values are often caught in the ruins. If there are new problems in our day, Christ is still the answer. It is wickedly foolish to teach that past generations exhausted the knowledge or resources of Christ. He is still and will remain the answer of the moral and spiritual problems of life. In the light of His life let the problems be faced.

“FOOTSTEPS IN THE SAND”

CHURCHES like people often have a strange history. But a strange history is only what people leave behind of strange action or life. Sometimes people leave queer footprints in the sands of life over which they pass; and sometimes wonderful footprints. Most congregations could write an autobiography filled with human interest in which the tragic element would not be lacking. When a church has had a period of successful operation it is due, as a review will show, to successful leadership and intelligent co-operation. Failure comes from the reverse condition.

Ninth Church history goes back into the dim and uncertain past. In the days when Washington and Franklin were familiar figures on Market Street, Margaret Duncan owned and conducted a grocery store on that thoroughfare. She was prosperous and acquired a “farm” in the suburbs, out along Thirteenth and Market Streets. She paid a visit to her native land in 1760 and on her return voyage was on a sailing vessel which lost its way, and starvation’s gaunt form came aboard. It is a weird and gruesome story that is told of that voyage and one which seems authentic. Facing death, Margaret Duncan vowed to the Lord that if her life was spared she would erect a house of worship in Philadelphia as a recognition of her deliverance. Deliverance came and her vow was

kept, not in her life, but provision was made in her will for such an edifice. It was built by her executors on Thirteenth Street above Market, at that time well out of town. This building was opened in November, 1815.

The little congregation formed in this building was known as an Associate Reformed Church. It was our own congregation in swaddling clothes. This congregation applied to Presbytery May 22, 1822, for enrollment as a Presbyterian church, and took the name of Ninth Presbyterian Church. In May, 1825, Rev. John Chambers was called, but Presbytery refused to ordain him. He later received ordination from the Congregational Church and established a Congregational Church at Broad and Sansom. Most of our people went with the new organization, only twelve members remaining. In December, 1840, some members of the Associate Reformed Church living hereabouts entered suit for the Margaret Duncan building on the ground that the Ninth Church had alienated the property from the body to which it had been given. The suit was successful and the building went to the contestants. It became ultimately the property of the Second U. P. Church, and the corner-stone of the famous old edifice may still be seen above the door of that church on Race Street. Our congregation worshipped in various halls until a new edifice was erected in 1841 at Sixteenth and Sansom. Through many convulsions and disturbances the old church has held on its way; and will continue. And may we be careful of the steps we leave in the sands of life.

THE DESERT AND THE STREAM

THEY love their desert. They leave you in no doubt about it as they talk of their wonderful days and nights; days of glorious sunshine and nights that seem like a thousand miracles joined in one vast scintillating dome. The stars dilate and sparkle before your wandering eyes. And they are in such astonishing numbers. These desert people admit they need more water. All about is desert, a land of sage and cactus and greasewood. The sun pitilessly kills everything that is tender. Far on the west is a majestic range terminating the horizon. Near by on the east sun-baked promontories rise into a splendid mountain chain. One cliff rising higher than all the rest holds snow in its defiles until late in the summer. These wind-tortured cliffs stand like battlements and suggest gigantic ruins of a past civilization. In the wide, flat valley there is only desert and dust through which the train hurries on.

But of a sudden out of the car window trees appear, and as you draw near and the train stops you discover flowers and grass and a beautiful little city with well kept streets. Well groomed men and women are at the station. That little city was a surprise in the desert. During my stay I discovered in the streets her secret. I saw the reason why the desert was not having its way in this mile-square place of homes and

comfort. There is always a reason, and the reason for the trees and homes in the desert was a stream that I saw one morning come into the town. The gutter was cracked and sun-baked and the stream was muddy, but it was slowly forcing its way along and ultimately reached all parts of the community. I stopped and watched its progress. What an ordinary stream it was! It was a common enough sight to the residents, but it was a wonder to me. I thought of the overflow of the Nile and the life of Egypt. The glory of the Pharaohs was due to the floods of the great river. Twice each month this muddy stream coursed through the gutters bringing life to the trees and the gardens and lawns. The mocking-bird sings here and I love its varied notes; but no other song could be half so sweet in the desert as the gurgling of the waters in the common gutters. In low vibrant sounds they were singing the song of life.

Out from the narrow canyon in the range came a slender stream which was carefully husbanded and brought on its mission of life. That stream from the mountain was the explanation of the trees and flowers. It held back the desert and wooed into being the beauty and strength of the little city. I thought of the stream which makes glad the city of God of which the Scriptures speak, and of Him who supplies the stream of living water for the arid fields of life—streams which give life in abundance. Out of the mountains of God's grace the streams of life flow.

THE BLUE BIRD AND HAPPINESS

THERE is a children's story of past days I have heard that carries a truth to live by. There was a man who longed for happiness, but for him happiness was elusive. At times it seemed near, but it always disappeared before it came into his possession. He had heard that if he could see a certain kind of blue bird it would bring him the coveted happiness. He therefore set off in search of that which would mean so much to him. He traveled far and near. He sought it in foreign lands and in strange places. Bits of information led him from place to place, but always in vain. His eyes grew weary of searching and not finding. Discouraged, he at length returned home. He had not seen the beautiful omen of happiness. He was glad to be back even though he seemed to have failed. And as he passed up the walk he saw in his own yard, in one of his own trees, the very bird he had been seeking far and wide. It had never been very far from him if he had only had eyes to see it.

How much like life that is! People travel the world over for beautiful landscapes and come home to discover the beauty of their own. I have often wondered why we should see with better and clearer vision the beauty of strange lands and unfamiliar scenes. A prophet is usually without honour in his own country and among his own people. It seems

like a queer sort of blindness. I have heard of a man who wearied of his country home and put it on the market. It had lost its attraction for him. He then began a search for a desirable place. He determined to have quiet woods and well-watered meadows. He must have scenes that would not grow stale with daily contact. One day he read in a magazine a description of just such a place. But what was his surprise to find on calling on the agent that it was his own country home. He was seeing it through a stranger's eyes. With that article in his pocket he went back to his own place and discovered that it was all true. He had just been blind to the merits of that which was his own. The blue bird was among his trees, flitting in his familiar landscape. He took his home off the market and went back to it feeling the force of the old proverb, "The eyes of the fool are on the ends of the earth."

Something of this must have been in the mind of our Lord when He said that the Kingdom came not with observation, is not on the front page of the newspapers, or written up in the magazines. There will always be those who say, "Lo, here is Christ, or Lo, there!" Always somewhere else! Always across some far horizon! Always far away! He warned against seeking happiness from afar, against placing any divine efficacy in far distances. He stated what we have found as a fact of experience that the Kingdom of God is among us. And that is the secret of happiness. This is the blue bird that may always be found within our own landscape.

"HOW BEAUTIFUL THE SKY IS!"

WE were walking along the street of a town in the desert of New Mexico. The burning sun had sunk behind the San Andreas range of mountains and with the night had come a refreshing coolness and the brilliant desert sky. We had come from her home and were on our way to the evening service in the little church of which her husband was the pastor. It was a comfortable adobe building lately coated with pebble-dash. He had gone on to take care of some preliminaries connected with the service. I had learned something of their past in the days we had been together. She had been a teacher in a mission school in the South before her marriage, and since they had rendered exceptional service together in a number of difficult and important positions. She was a slight little body, but the years had dealt kindly with her, leaving her full capacity for life and service. This evening she was telling me of her oldest daughter who is a missionary in Egypt, of another daughter and son who are students in the state university. I was taking occasional meals in the little manse prepared by her own hands. Her home was inviting and restful. Her mind was always busy, busy with the problems that confronted them as the representatives of the Church in this isolated field. She was far removed

from many things she had qualities to enjoy, but she radiated a culture which seemed native to her soul.

As we made our way to the church I said to her: "Do you like it out here?" She was silent for a few eloquent moments and then said: "I loved the woods and streams of my native state. Nothing can be more beautiful to me than green fields. When we first came we never spoke to each other of the barren wastes, knowing full well what each was thinking. But we spoke of the good things. We kept saying, 'How beautiful the sky is!' And now I do not mind the desert so much and I love my work." It was worth the long trip across the country to hear her talk about her work. She is no candidate for sympathy and one never thinks of offering it to her.

The desert only too often takes the song and spirit out of people. Barrenness kills aspirations. There are deep sea creatures which lose their sight in the dark, heavy water. There are others whose eyes are greatly developed in the same darkness. The desert has no power to take the spirit from this frail little woman of the manse. One might think her powers were enlarged. She said to me in speaking of her task, "You know I am a descendant of William the Conqueror." But a greater than William was responsible for her spirit. I wanted to tell you of her on Mother's Day. In her sight no task is small which He assigns and no place remote where He goes. I thought of the hymn we often sing lightly, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, over mountain or plain or sea." That hymn was to her living truth.

“BE THAT BIGGER MAN!”

WE were discussing problems that faced us, my friend and I. They were real and from some angles, disconcerting. That is always the situation with men who undertake any real task or follow any worth-while avenue of service. Situations develop that were never thought of at the beginning, and difficulties rise like mountains across the way. These problems keep one awake at night for there are so many ways of doing things wrong; so many mistaken possibilities. And it is not getting any easier to manage a church these days. I was expressing a bit of pessimism in an unguarded moment as one will with his friends. Then he told me the story of one of our missionaries who wrote to the board offering his resignation of the post he held. He told of the difficulties he was facing, of the problems that had to be solved. He said the position he held was so important that it required a bigger man to fill it. He was therefore resigning that a bigger man might be sent to fill the place.

There is something in that story that appeals to every minister of the Gospel, every teacher and Christian worker. For tasks that call for a trained educator, a skillful manager, an able pleader, a wise administrator, must usually be done by one and the same person. And questions from every field of life

come pressing into the room where the modern minister wrestles with sermons, administrations, pastoral duties, and moral issues of all sorts. I knew something of the pressure that was on that missionary's mind and heart. There is a consciousness in understanding minds that the tasks of Christ require bigger men. The tasks are so large and personal limitations are so real! If one leaves the matter here, then the resignation is the reasonable thing to make way for the bigger man.

There is a better way and it was indicated by the wise secretary who received the resignation. The cable carried back the reply to the discouraged missionary, "Stay on the field; be that bigger man." He knew the man who steadfastly faces a hard task is enlarged by it. The storm that rages against the oak beautifies the fibre of the oak. The strength of an enemy passes into the arm that fights for the right. One may rise over difficulties into a full stature. Even an ordinary soul may build stately mansions for itself; but always on the field of conflict. Any man may be that bigger man by facing cheerfully his task, being willing, if need be, to fail. Having done all to stand; with his back against the wall, it may be. But such a man does not fail. Forces spend themselves and problems clear. One thinks of Moses, who said, "Who am I that I should go into Egypt?" Yet God did not accept his resignation, but kept him on the field to be the bigger man that was needed! Not the resignation, but the devoted spirit and the will to win supply the bigger man for your task.

SUNSET AND EVENING CLOUDS

WEST MEADOW BEACH on Long Island is a choice place to witness the spectacle of sunset. It has drawn me on many a quiet summer evening, when, without announcement or price, the marvelous pageant of the closing day is staged. The harbour offers quiet water for the reflections of the sky and it opens out into the sound for a wide and deep perspective. The far-away mainland affords a rendezvous for the clouds gathered for a farewell to the passing day. There are no repetitions. The resources of the sky are marshaled in infinite variety. With a setting of glory all about him the sun bids the landscape adieu, whose life he has served, ere the night spreads her sable covering over sea and land. It is a beautiful gesture after a day of blessing.

There had been days of rain and storm on the island, followed by a day of sunshine. We went to the beach expecting a spectacle of great beauty, and we were not disappointed. It rivaled the best moments of the Northern Lights, when the whole northern quadrant is a stage for the silvery, mystic cotillion of the sky. The sky was deep and blue and clear except for fugitive clouds here and there. Far away on the mainland was a dark cloud-rim into which the sun was dropping. A flaming path of fire led out over the quiet water of the bay to the glorious orb. When the

sun reached the foggy rim of the horizon scenes of amazing beauty came, held for a moment and gave place to others. The veiled sun imparted its glory to the veiling clouds. All the colours of the spectrum were spread as by a master artist in gigantic proportions over the western sky. What indescribable tints and shadings; crimson to dark purple. Golden flames rolled silently, changing while you looked. The quiet waters of the bay were suddenly changed into a sea of gold. Deep purple clouds formed the base on which forms of glory unfolded. A river of gold appeared, flowing quietly between banks in the sky. Islands broke the flowing stream and high mountains buttressed the banks and shut the river in a deep but wide valley. The east caught the glory of the west as the sun was lost from view and the sky was an arch of gold. As the sun was withdrawing its light from the scene, leaving the earth to the realm of night, a mountain range appeared, a range of gold, with forests covering the top and filling the dark defiles. It was such a sight as one might expect to see in heaven where the glory of God is unveiled.

As the pageant faded out I became conscious of a group of people near by eating a lunch on the sand. They were watching some bathers in the tide which was gradually covering the naked bars. Their talk was of the bathers and the bars. Evidently they had not seen the spectacle, and I wondered if they really had no eyes for the glory of God in the sky. I remembered how our Lord had said that some people could not even see the Kingdom of God.

“WHERE DOES THIS ROAD GO?”

IT is a delightful experience to turn from the traveled highway to the quiet country road. In itself it is a relief to get away from the throbbing artery, the great stone way where everybody seems to be in a hurry. Living in a house by the side of the road has become highly intensified since the advent of the motor car. Attention is claimed by unsightly stands and flaring signs from every nook or point of vantage. But the side roads lure to sequestered valleys and quiet woods where the air is laden with the homely smell of the earth. These roads so often wind as the brook winds, then lead out under the edge of the hill. The scientific road-builder with his mighty tractor straightens the curves, pulls down the hill and tears away the overhanging bank. He lets in the sun at the expense of the trees and makes a way that is safe for swiftly rolling wheels. This is all very well for the man with a schedule, but the way near to nature's heart is the way that never knew the surveyor's skill. This road offers itself in the quest of beauty, beauty which belongs to him who can find it.

One day in New England we were following one of those inviting ways, darkened along much of its course by the branches of the trees. We had turned from the road where the race of men raced by to this one where there was no suggestion of hurry. These roads

are seldom marked. They are used by people who know the country and the way. We had gone along for some time indifferent to distance or direction. It was good just to be alive in God's out-of-doors. At length we came upon a countryman, and stopping the car I asked him, "Where does this road go?" It seemed to be a winding road that winds and winds and goes nowhere. His reply was one to awaken thought, for he said: "This road goes everywhere. You can go anywhere you want to on it." It seemed to be a way along the brook, a way separated from the great world; but it was connected with all roads. The truth of what he said flashed upon me. Every road is an open road on which one travels as one wills. It is not the road but the desire that leads to destination. This road might take me home or to some wilderness across the horizon. For the road winds and winds and leads everywhere.

As we drove on the words of the countryman remained with me. And I thought how much like that winding road are the ways of life. Not the roadway, but desire determines destination. The ways of life, like the road of the woodland, wind for us as we wish to our desired haven. This is the meaning of Oxenham's stanza:

"To every man there openeth a way and ways and a way;
And the high soul climbs the high way and the low soul
gropes the low!
And in between on the misty flats the rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth a high way and a low;
And every man decideth the way his soul shall go."

WHAT'S IN YOUR CUP?

WE were having supper in the open. It was in the fall of the year, when the evenings are short and night comes on quickly. But even this adds to the occasion if your party loves the out-of-doors. There is a charm all its own that accompanies the falling night. We are so used to it that its wonder often fails to stir a response in us. It is a pity that we allow our minds to be so occupied with projects and cares that we miss the wonders of the passing day. The shadows rapidly lengthen, the sky darkens, dusk rises from the valley, spreading over the fields, and night draws her veil over the earth. Or if one chances to be on the plains the brightness of day modulates into the glory of night through an infinite variety of dissolving colour tones. But everywhere the passing day is attended with scenes of beauty.

On this occasion we were sitting about a fire by a brook. It was a charming bit of nature to which we had gone for the evening. The brook was noisily making its way through the rocky ravine. The spectral bodies of the beech trees stood out in the fading light of the wooded glen, while the oaks and shellbarks were merging with the common night. Upstream a little distance, half hidden by the trees, was a stone bridge whose arch spanned the stream for the roadway. It was as beautiful to the eye from our position as it was

useful to the traveler as he hurries along the avenue on some mission. The fire had served its purpose for the meal and was glowing fitfully as it burned itself out. While we were enjoying the comforts of the evening I filled a cup from a thermos bottle and offered it to a companion sitting near. "What's in your cup?" he asked. On being told it was coffee he declined it, saying it would keep him awake the night through.

That question comes back to me, for we are always offering cups to others. What's in the cup? There is the cup of blessing, a delightful draught, like cold water to the thirsty. It may be in the form of a helping hand when the load is heavy; or a kind word when the heart is lacerated. It may be a word of cheer when there is discouragement; or a bit of fellowship when the way is lonely. This cup of blessing is never out of reach if you want to give it. Or it may be a cup of evil which we offer—a sleep-destroying, heart-wringing cup! That is a brew made of common earthy stuff. There are those who seem to take delight in handing out cups of bitterness. They "say what they think," no matter what they may be thinking. They never stop to think again whether their thoughts may be right or wrong. They pass on loose words that destroy reputation and make life hard. They criticise without information or discrimination. Would that one might decline their cup! The cup of blessing enriches him who gives and him who receives. The cup of evil can only destroy; but its greatest devastation is wrought in the soul of him who gives it.

PREACHING TO THE PREACHER

WE recently had a visiting minister in our pulpit at the morning service. While waiting for his part in the service his eyes fell upon a sentence nailed to the minister's side of the pulpit. It impressed him as it has others who have taken part in our services. When he arose to speak he referred to the sentence and how it affected him. He thought it was a wonderful motto and expressed the conviction that it held within itself the great theme of all preaching and the master motive of any real ministry. That sentence, "Sir, we would see Jesus," was a request made by some strangers of one who knew Him.

But the visiting minister made one mistake. He assumed that the sentence had been placed by the church as a request to the minister; that the desire for a living gospel had found this expression. It was not an unnatural assumption for there is no other message that will satisfy spiritual longing. From the point of view of the people it is a sane request to place on the minister's side of the pulpit for him to see in summer and winter; in times of both an ebbing and a flowing spiritual tide. No hour of worship can have any great profit if the desire to see Jesus is not realized. Since the time of the prophet who heard the voice asking, "What shall I preach?" there has been but one answer to that question. It was perfectly

natural for our visitor to congratulate the congregation on the sentence he thought they had affixed to the pulpit on the minister's side.

But perhaps not a score of our people have seen the challenging statement or knew it was there. It was not placed by any action of the Session or at the request of any committee or board. It was placed there by the minister himself early in his pastorate; and for nobody under the sun but himself. His hand nailed it there for his eyes to see. He was not thinking of any one else or caring whether any one else saw it or not. He wanted it to preach to him while he was preaching to others; to hold him steady when difficulties arose tumultuously. He nailed it where he could not escape it under any motive or stress. When he takes his seat behind the pulpit and lifts up his eyes, there it is. When he rises to preach, it is the last thing he sees. The big black letters call to him in the language of seekers after God, "Sir, we would see Jesus." When unhappy things take place, when there are confusion and discord, it holds the mind to a single purpose. When questions come hurtling at the mind and heart from pews that may be vacant like arrows from the unseen, the fact lying back of the words forms a shield that saves from stupefying wounds. When there are misunderstanding and frustrated hopes and plans, this brief message calls him to the essential thing. Whatever temptation any passing day might offer to the preacher the request of the strangers offers its protest and its better way.

“PLAY THE GAME!”

I WAS with some friends one autumn afternoon attending a contest between two college teams. The teams were evenly matched and there was no telling which would win the honours. This served to increase the interest and put each team on its mettle. There were strong points and weak points in each. Some players were always to be counted on, while others were not so dependable. This afternoon it was important that every man should play his position with reference to the whole team. The captain was talking to the team and we heard him say as his last word, “Play the game!” Every man knew what he meant. The success of the team required the best of every man for the position he held. The victory of the team was honour enough for any player. Playing the game meant obedience, self-sacrifice and coöperation. As I watched that team go through to victory that afternoon I kept hearing the word of the captain to his men, “Play the game!”

That expression has passed into current use with a very definite meaning. Business men use it when they are urging efficiency upon their staff of employees. Fathers use it in talking to their sons about the responsibilities of life. Business is a game. Life is a game. A game implies team-mates, relationship, a common aim. One player is not the whole team, al-

though the failure of one may defeat all. Christy Mathewson always played the game and brought many victories to his team. He also gave credit to his team-mates for his own greatness on the diamond. On the day of his funeral the President of the United States, with 35,000 other citizens, stood uncovered in honour of this "Christian gentleman" who always played the game both on the diamond and off it. There was great temptation in his long athletic history, but when the great Umpire "called him out" he and his team-mates knew he had played the game.

In the Church and in the Kingdom there is a game to play. There is a common goal that requires self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness. It was Paul who said that God had set the members in the body as it pleased Him. God tempers the body together that there should be no schism. The winning of the goal for the body of Christ is honour enough for every man. There can be no honour for any member apart from the honour of the Cause for which we are bound together. God has chosen some pastors, some teachers, some ruling elders, some trustees, some heads of departments. Our talent is at once a call of God to service and an investment of God for service. It was the great Captain Himself who gave to every man his work. It is He who asks us to play the game each in his own position. It is a great thing to be on His team and play the game under His eye.

“ISN’T THAT A BLOW TO RELIGION?”

“**I**SN’T that a blow to religion,” my companion was saying as he read the great black headlines of the papers on the news-stand. Most of the front page under the headlines was occupied by the story of faithlessness of certain church people. Everybody seemed to be reading the slimy story of infidelity to the high ideals professed. “I do not see how the Church of Christ can survive things like this,” he continued. And while he was speaking a new supply of the evening papers was thrown on the stand for the ceaseless streams of people using the subway. We stood for a time watching the big pile diminish as people in all walks of life filed past the stand. We finally took the subway train with the crowd and practically every one in the train was reading the sordid story. As we observed practically every face buried in a paper my friend added, “How can we ever recover from this baptism of filth?”

Many pastors admitted the tragedy had slowed up their work, or cast a chill upon the spiritual life of the congregation. It gave to the irreligious an opportunity to mock at religion. It was a liability charged by the unthinking world to the account of the Church. The sarcasm of worldly people is matched only by the mental anguish of thousands of loyal ministers and Christian workers.

But is it true that this or any other similar tragedy is a blow to religion? Is it true that the Church is discounted by the moral failure of anybody who may go contrary to her teaching in public or private? Is it not rather the unmasking of hypocrisy? Is it not another vindication of the Scripture, "Be sure your sin will find you out"? Is it not really a new demonstration of the value of Christian character? The failure was only in the attempt to evade the consequences of sin. The screaming headlines of those papers were to me irrefutable evidence of the folly of sin at which "fools make a mock." Those hundreds of papers in which so many faces were buried were saying, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." And only that!

"Ministers are no better than other folks," it is said with lilting accent. And that is true if they are no better Christians than other folks. They may or may not be! But let it be said to the honour of truth that the percentage of ministers who fail in moral things is negligible. The world is not looking for merit in the Church or in ministers, but for flaws! The flaws are "news" and are flouted to heaven; the merit is unheralded. Those who give the moral failure of anybody as a reason for rejecting Christ or slowing up in service will find the reason reasonless at the end of the day! Moral failures are not the product of the Church but of that which opposeth and exalteth itself. The counterfeit does not discount the value of the real coin of the realm. Moral failures emphasize pointedly the real need of real religion.

"GOD AND COMPANY"

THERE have always been strong men in congregations that stood out in front and beckoned the church to follow. They may not have been conscious always of their leadership, which usually makes the leadership the more effective. Such men carry a heavy load. Many problems bring themselves to their door. Many duties await the willing and earnest hands of the men who care. They must invariably pay the price that followers exact of leaders. That price is often a heavy exaction. Prophets have never been without honour; but not in their own time and their own company. Yet without these men who go before there could be no worth-while progress. It is a stagnant church that has no outstanding men who are willing to go ahead and bear responsibility and blaze the way and trust in God. Our church had such a leader in Craig N. Liggett, who for about forty years was superintendent of the Sunday School and for many years the clerk of the Session.

He had a rare gift of concise and pointed address. I never missed his five-minute talk to the school unless absence was unavoidable. He seemed unconscious of it himself, but those brief talks were usually masterpieces. "Did you ever see a sign," he said one day, "reading like this: 'God and Company'?" I have walked many miles on city streets and yet I have never

seen such a sign over any place of business. In fact there is never any indication given directly or indirectly that there is any connection between God and the great business houses of our cities. And yet," he continued, "the partnership between men and God is one of the commonest facts." He proceeded in his address to show how the business man depends on God; and the farmer and the scientist. He was telling the young people before him that without God life is futile; that godliness is profitable in all things, having promise in this life as well as in the life hereafter.

Churches as well as individuals sometimes forget about that partnership with God. In plans, in budgets, in endeavours! It seems so easy to leave God out of account! Strange, isn't it? Such forgetfulness unless checked means in the end moral and spiritual insolvency. "Without me ye can do nothing" has no reservations or qualifications when applied to the work of the Kingdom. Our Lord was speaking to the disciples who were to carry the plans of the Kingdom on into the centuries when He said that. Only His active coöperation with the Church can bring success. Wheels may go around, time and money may be given, but unless the Master Himself sits in when plans are made nothing will be done that is worth while. Later on when great things were in evidence some people said, "How do you explain it? Are not all these Galileans?" And Peter, expressing the great fact of partnership, said, "Yes, Galileans—and God." Through that partnership "He hath brought forth this which you see and hear."

“IN THE LONG RUN”

TWO men were discussing a business policy with a moral issue attached to it. It was an ordinary matter with an ordinary moral issue as most matters and issues are. One of these men was pointing out things in the policy that were morally wrong and predicted failure on that basis. This elicited the reply from the other, “In the long run you are right, but ——” He did not finish the sentence; and most people who try to get rid of a moral issue make that sort of admission and end their sentence with a dash. All observing people know there is no run but the long run. There is no such thing as striking a true balance until the policy runs its course. “God does not settle all accounts in October,” said a Christian husbandman to his irreligious neighbour, who had boasted that his harvests were as bountiful without prayer, without assuming moral responsibility, without even the recognition of God, as were those of the man who wore the yoke of Christ. But it is a short-sighted man who does not see that the things of life are things of the long run. Any other way is a blind alley or worse. And how astonishingly long the run often appears! Conclusions are never in a hurry, and a thousand years are with God as a day!

But the long run is the right run! A few months ago a minister living in Ohio made a savage attack on

some of our boards and secretaries. His damaging leaflet was sent to all Presbyterian elders in the land and was published on the front page of our newspapers. Here was a fine bit of news! Statements in the leaflet were disconcerting and had a tendency to break down confidence and slow up activity. When this minister was asked by his presbytery to make good his charges he could not, for the facts were against him. His statement fell lifeless to the earth. His presbytery charged him with circulating false statements, with using intemperate, coarse, inexcusable language. To gratify an unholy motive he had violated the law of Christ and the law of life. In the long run he was broken by his own conduct. How could it be otherwise? One may be able to make black seem white, but ultimately reality appears.

It is a lesson hard to learn, this lesson of the long run. The fact that God does not settle all accounts in October seems obscured to many otherwise keen-eyed men. For men who shut their eyes to the long run seem to prosper. They are like the green bay tree which spreads itself forth. But when you look again after a bit their prosperity has gone. Esau was hungry and for a present physical need sold his spiritual future. Demas forsook Paul and Christ because the immediate prospect contained hardship and suffering. His love of this present world we now see, as Paul then saw, was foolish and short-sighted. We may bring sorrow and anxiety to others for a time by wrong doing, but ultimately the evil comes back to its source and abides in the life that sent it forth.

“WHAT ARE FUNDAMENTALS?”

IT all depends upon your point of view. I once heard a man speak for an hour on “Fundamentals of the Faith” and he passed over without a reference things which were indeed fundamentals and stressed others which were quite secondary as it seemed to me. He was seeing things from a point of view which unconsciously inflicted obliquity of vision on him. Esau came in from the wilderness faint with weariness and hunger. Seeing his brother Jacob out in front of his tent with a fire under a pot and a savoury odour greeting his nostrils, he drew near. His chase had been fruitless and that savoury odour had a powerful influence over him. These twin brothers were not overly good friends at best. They were different. They saw things differently and lived differently. The man of the wilderness now had the appetite and the man of the domestic taste had the pot of lentels. “Give me some of your pottage,” said the hunter, “for I am faint!” “Give me your birthright in exchange,” said the man with the food. “If I die of hunger,” thought Esau, “the birthright will be of no use to me! It is a visionary sort of thing anyway. It is food I need, not a birthright.” What are fundamentals? It depends on the man who answers and his point of view.

And yet there are of course fundamentals in religion. But I have never yet seen any place in Scrip-

ture where any one was designated to name them or catalogue them. And yet there are of course great Christian verities. They stand out in the record; how Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification; how love of God and man is discovered to be the law of life; how God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. We cannot miss these and others.

We do well to beware of the inerrancy of the syllogism. More things are wrought in the fields of life by faith, under the leadership of the Spirit, than the apostles of the syllogism ever dream of. It overcomes more heresy than was ever crushed by fire or sword or bulls. I may be a perfectly good theologian and a miserably poor Christian. I may understand all mysteries and still be nothing as a follower of Christ. Heresy is of the heart as truly as of the head. It is more dangerous when of the heart for in the heart motives live and out of it the issues of life come. Christianity is a system of doctrine of course. But if it ends there, it is nothing. Vital Christianity is a life. And we can only know the doctrine as we live the life. A Christian is one whose life is centered on Christ, not one who believes something about Christ, however true the things may be. "Why call ye me Lord Lord and do not the things which I say," exclaimed Jesus! What a comfort it is to turn away from the divisive theories of many systems and schools to the narratives of the Gospels and the letters of Paul! We are disciples of Christ if we do what He commands us. What could be more fundamental?

“I OBEY MY CONSCIENCE”

THE history of the world is littered with stories that convict conscience of being a disturber of the peace. When a man invokes his conscience we usually put up barriers against him. What is conscience? What is its function? It is a voice God has placed within us which keeps saying, “Do right!” Many things we do are unmoral. Conscience has nothing to say about my choice of streets to go down town! But when I face a moral issue conscience keeps saying, “Do right!” But conscience never tells any man what is right; not any more than the ear sees or the eye hears. “I obey my conscience,” said a friend of mine in justification of his conduct. “You may do all that and still be dead wrong,” I rejoined. Some of the most atrocious crimes have been committed with the sanction of the conscience. Paul gave his assent to Stephen’s death in “all good conscience.” Charles IX went to worship piously on the morning of the wholesale massacre on St. Bartholomew’s day which he authorized. Isaiah said Israel was at once worshipful and wicked. Conscience urges us to do what is right! But what if we have a mistaken notion of what is right? Then conscience drives the soul out to sea.

In the community where I was raised there were people who believed Saturday was the true Sabbath. Their conscience told them to do right. They obeyed

and kept Saturday and worked Sunday. Most of us believed Sunday was the true Sabbath. For us conscience also urged doing right and we kept Sunday. In the day of Paul there were those who believed an idol was a rival of God and when meat was offered for sale which had first been in an idol's temple, they refused to buy or eat it under the urge of conscience to do right. Other men, among whom was Paul, knew an idol was nothing; under the same urge of conscience they bought and ate this meat. They had knowledge that an idol was nothing; they could eat. But another man who had not that knowledge could not eat without violating his conscience.

Ignorance or misinformation is the bane of the conscience. The court that is furnished false evidence reaches a false decision. With misinformation, prejudice, ignorance instead of the truth, conscience will approve the wrong. Ignorantly it may give its moral urge to do what is immoral. But conscience must have obedience. If a man thinks an idol is something then his conscience will urge him not to eat, and if he eats his conscience is defiled. Disobedience brings moral anarchy into individual life. Luther staked everything on obedience to his conscience. He said if they would convince him he was wrong out of Scripture or by reason he would recant. Otherwise he said: "Here I stand! I can do no other!" Jesus is the Lord of the conscience, giving it light and perspective and courage and freedom. He is the Truth which makes the moral urge of conscience right.

“IT MUST BE HARD TO PLEASE SO MANY”

IT is always interesting to hear another person discuss your work. To see yourself in action through the eyes of other people is often helpful, sometimes disconcerting and occasionally amusing. The best of us get into ruts, although we may feel we are moving along in a fairly wide plain. Friendly criticism is valuable, and a man who makes progress has a ready ear for it. You will often realize that your critic does not understand your problems; for real problems are seldom superficial. The minister can rarely give the plumber any valuable trade advice. Sometimes your friend will drop a remark that reveals he does not understand your task at all; that he hasn't been behind the scenes or sensed the big task of your work.

Not so long ago I was sitting on a box with a good friend. It was his box, and we were discussing his work and the future that seemed to be opening. If I made any remarks that were born of ignorance it was his own fault for he was asking me questions and soliciting my opinions. But if so, he returned the compliment; for on that same box he discussed my work and problems. It was interesting for it was a revelation of the misconception an intelligent man, a member of the Church, can have about the task of a minister. He had not the slightest idea of the magnitude of the pastoral work, the task that presses upon every

square inch of the pastor's soul with the consistency of gravitation. He thought the pastor's task was for the most part limited to Sunday; six days of rest after one of labour! But perhaps his most vital misunderstanding was revealed in the remark, "It must be hard to please so many people." I suppose he had been hearing some criticism, that bit of condemnation or withheld commendation which forms so easily in public speech about public men. It had aroused sympathy in his mind for me; my task was so impossible!

He seemed surprised, perhaps a bit shocked, when I told him I did not try to please people; that it had never appealed to me as a thing to be done. "Men-pleasers" is not a term synonymous with servants of Christ. It would be a task suitable for some sort of superman who could be all things to all people and please everybody. But surely the Head of the Church never gave any such motive. Think of Paul trying to please the people of Corinth, or Phillips Brooks trying to please the people of Boston. Think of any minister anywhere with any such motive. The minister fortunately has but One to please. That fact is the minister's secret of a happy pastorate. It was Paul who said, "If I please men I should not be the servant of Christ." Any minister who seeks to please others than Christ is the prophet of some false god. I have wondered whether it was this danger that Jesus had in mind when He said, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." Surely there is nothing in His commission about pleasing people, few or many.

"CHRISTMAS!"

CHRISTMAS EVE did not count very much with us. It was only the evening before, and we were usually off early to bed. But the first one awake of the younger set shouted "Christmas!" And the house was soon astir. For us it was the great day of the year. Not that there was any extensive giving or receiving of gifts; indeed there was little of that. Some useful things were provided for each member of the family, things which were needed. But it was Christmas and there was something that set the world athrill. The humdrum and drudgery went into eclipse over night. There was a new joy in living. Nobody tried to explain it; it was just Christmas. And the years have not extracted the joy, however the mode of expression may have changed. Notwithstanding the externals which have attached themselves to Christmas as parasites, the sky is bluer and deeper and the world more beautiful on that day.

That it is not the same to everybody is evident. I was caught in the shopping throng a day or two ago at the post-office. The wind was bitter, and, like others, I was trying to manage more packages than two hands could hold. When I finally reached the window I said to the official serving there, "Do you like Christmas?" She snapped back, "I should say not!" But further along another official with whom I had busi-

ness, labouring with receipts and change and packages and crowds of people, said in answer to the same question, "Sure! I think it's great!" I went to the great store and was charmed with the exquisite decorations. It was Christmas visualized. What a contrast to my boyhood years when there was nothing but Christmas trees and the sky and woods! Here wealth, art and science were endeavouring to give expression to the Christmas spirit, a marvelous endeavour. As I made my way through the store I observed some radiant faces and some dour. What throngs of jostling people were here! On colliding with a woman laden with packages I said, "We're too big for this space accompanied by Christmas." "Yes," she laughingly responded, "but Christmas is worth it." Later that day I went to the home of one long sick. On her bedside table were bottles and glasses and her Bible. A smile lingered on her face as I told her good-bye, and she said: "Everything is all right;" and I knew she understood the meaning of Christmas.

As I drove home through the winter night, glorious in the light of the waning moon, I realized anew that a world without Christmas is dark and the people earth-bound. Whatever else has gotten into Christmas, joy belongs there. The child who shouts "Christmas!" has an understanding heart. The world pays its tribute by silent factories and closed office doors. If Christmas were only an anniversary it would have faded out long ago. It is more than a beautiful day in the year. It is like a fire in the snow that fills the heart with cheer.

ONE NINE TWO SEVEN

IT has taken the cyclometer on the wheel of Time a long while to turn this figure up. We have traveled far. It was set at naught for this trip back there at Bethlehem. Mountains and plains, deserts and fields have been swiftly passed. We have witnessed the founding of the Christian Church, the fall of the Roman empires, the building of the Roman papacy through the usurpations of the bishop of Rome. We have seen the rise of the British Empire and the German nation, the passing of the power of Spain and Portugal. Along our way we observed the efforts of Columbus, his discovery of America, the heroic efforts at colonization in the new world and the building of new institutions in the new world. It has been a wonderful way, this, represented by the number on the dial, one nine two seven. Sometimes the way has been storm-swept. It has been marked by human mistakes and consequent failures. And we are just emerging from the anguish and madness of the great war.

We have traveled far over the mystic highways of the skies. And in all the centuries there has been no annullment of the schedule and no delay. We have been guided in our flight through time and space by our sun, a star, one of the smaller stars that scintillate in the vast spaces of the universe. It was Emerson who urged young men to hitch their wagon to a star.

Our earth is a sort of a wagon hitched to a star. At what amazing speed it has gone, is going! Scientists tell us we are traveling with our star 43,200 miles an hour. If you multiply this by the 24 hours of the day and by the 365 days of the year and by 1927 years you will have the mileage of this vast flight through space. How silently and how smoothly has the gigantic wagon been drawn. We speak of the "solid earth," but more truly it is but a flying mote in the train of the star. It suggests the majestic spaces of God. Light travels 186,000 miles a second, or six million million miles in a year. Yet it requires 800 years for light to come to us from the average visible star. But so exact is the schedule of the sky that scientific men know our location among the stars and foretell the crossing of the ways. Surely the denial of God is folly!

"If I take the wings of the morning," said the Psalmist, "even there shall thy hand lead me!" The wings of the morning are the wings of light. It suggests that God's hand is guiding. That should satisfy. He knows the way. There are some who presume to predict times and seasons for the unfolding years, but events mock the presumption. God keeps His unfolding plan in His own counsel. We have traveled far in time, farther in space, since our numbers began to turn on the dial. Yet the greatest attainment has been in results. Nearer and nearer draws the time when His great purpose shall be revealed toward which we are speeding.

THE ASH-CARTS AND THE CHRISTMAS
TREES

OUR town usually presents a good appearance to one passing through the streets. She still holds a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind." We like to believe it is out of self-respect the marble steps of the old town are polished and the yards of the newer portion groomed. But once a week things are different. Overnight the sidewalks are loaded with the unsightly; anything that has served its day, everything that cannot be used. What a sight it is for the stranger not acquainted with our ways! We who claim the old town for our home think nothing of it; we are used to it. We are willing to blight one day in seven as ash and trash day for the benefit of the other six. Some time during that day the shouting, clattering ash-cart cohorts go through the street. They generously offend both the ear and the eye. Still one would not look for ash-carts to be decorated or built along the latest stream-lined model. They are after trash, most of which they get. And like the Volga boatman in one respect, they do finally get out of hearing.

One wet ash-day I overtook a cavalcade of these heavily laden carts going out to the city Gehenna. Trailing behind these shrouded carts were groups of Christmas trees, their tinsel gone, their candles out,

their glory departed. They were being dragged along the road to an inglorious end at the tail end of these ash-carts.

I made some remark about departed glory as we passed the ash train. My companion replied, "Yes! You might write a 'Corner' about it if there was any place to 'get off' after your story was told." But there are wholesome suggestions in the ash-carts trailing the discarded Christmas trees. There is a place to "get off." These trees had served a purpose; had helped shed the glow of happiness in the Christmas season. Children rejoiced in their mystic influence and sparkled good will. Older people were carried back through the years and were children again just for these nights. For the Christmas tree of to-day has the same spiritual and emotional glow as that of long ago. The music is in a quieter mood as we grow older, but it is still the enchanting strains of that silent night of the wondrous birth. The cavalcade was bearing the ashes of the coal that warmed the house, the remnants of the Christmas trees that warmed the heart! It is the way of things. "That which is seen is temporal," including Christmas trees. "Fear not them who kill the body;" for it, too, is like the Christmas tree. It is a wonderful habitation for a brief season. But life is spiritual; it does not reduce to ashes. It was not Christmas that was trailing at the tail of the ash-carts; only yesterday's expression of it. Christian truth survives, however our expressions of it must be folded away like a garment, or even trailed out to the ash-heap.

THE CRUSADER OF OSAWATOMIE

AN upturned suitcase affords me desk room, and the running-board of my automobile is a very satisfactory chair for the improvised desk. We have turned aside from the highway to see the old home of John Brown at North Elba. It is a place from which one does not hurry away. On every point of the compass lies an engaging scene, the Adirondacks in perspective. On the east rises White Face, a stately mountain of granite. Flanked by a group of mountains to the south, old Marcey lifts his great form, the highest of the Adirondack group. And nearer, McIntire, his competitor in bulk, claims attention. The globular rolls of a great cumulous cloud rest to-day lazily upon his summit. It is an inspiring scene in the quiet, clear atmosphere of an afternoon of the late summer. We have come to this place leisurely from Keene Valley, following the longest ways and the least frequented roads.

Above me flutters in the mountain breeze a large American flag, paying a nation's tribute to a man hanged as a traitor. A great iron fence erected by the State surrounds the graves of this unique man and twelve of his followers, one of them his own son. His monument is an enormous boulder left there when the mountains were brought forth. In this great stone are the roughly etched letters, J. B., cut by Brown

himself. Bronze tablets tell the extraordinary story of this man's career. The house in which he lived stands near by filled with the intimacies of his life. There is something fitting in this mountainous setting for the youth of the intrepid man of iron who, with a handful of men, made the historic attack at Harper's Ferry. Here he dreamed of a free country. Here he planned his expedition to Kansas in which he crystallized sentiment, cleared the political atmosphere and added Osawatomie to his name. These surrounding mountains made their appeal to him. The dim moon just now lies above White Face; but on many nights it must have poured its wordless message into his zealous heart as it lighted him home.

He had the courage of his convictions and a sincere and honest purpose. This brought him the support of people who did not agree with his plans. But as I sit here amid the changeless mountain scenes, the changes that have come impress me. He lies buried, as he requested, with his feet toward the J. B. which he cut in the enduring rock. But he that was then hanged as a traitor now lies under the breeze-swept folds of Old Glory, against which he made that hostile gesture. It comes to me that he saw more clearly than we have thought. His nation has forgotten his mistaken method in the greater merit of his moral heroism. Pilgrims like ourselves are here from all parts of the land to tarry a moment and do him honour. And I remember that Paul was so careless of contemporary opinion that he was willing to be considered a fool for the sake of the Gospel and the greater day on before.

“NOT DONE BY THE STORM!”

ONE summer afternoon I had gone to the home of a friend. A storm had passed over the country the night before and had left its imprint on the landscape. He lives on a corner at the top of a hill, and like himself his house faces the sun all day long. From his veranda one looks out on a woods, the trees of which in summer are hidden with their own luxuriant finery. But in winter all the finery is stripped off by the frost and the unclothed trees stand out in spectral nakedness. A splendid group of native trees stand on one side of his place. Their stately forms vie with each other in lifting high their arms to caress the souging breezes. The moods of the passing year find in them an instrument for the expression of their various sentiments. The listlessness of the summer day, the rippling wind of the autumn night, the wail of the winter storm, run their cadences on the mystic keys of nature's organ. He commands a bit of beautiful landscape beyond the city, just before the town and country meet.

This friend has an excellent garden on the rear of his estate. He knows the habits of things that grow and it is a great pleasure to walk with him through his garden and be introduced to the various sorts of living things. On this day after the storm we were in his garden. Observing a limb broken from a pear tree,

I said: "See what the storm did!" But he replied, "No, the storm did not do that. Something has happened to that branch. If you look, I think you will find some sort of a wound where that break is." I was interested, and picking the branch up found the wound. A furrow the size of a slate-pencil had been plowed around the branch just under the bark. After making the circuit the invader had cut his way into the heart of the branch. Taking my knife I began to explore and soon found him curled up in a den he had made for himself in the fallen branch. My friend was standing by as I turned the creature out with my knife-blade. "You see," he said, "that branch never had a chance in the storm."

I felt as I stood there with that broken-off branch in my hand that I had seen the same sort of thing in life. There are people who never have a chance in the storm. A man goes down under the tempest because "something has happened." Disgraceful things gracefully done may pass the bar of modern opinion, but the storm has to be reckoned with. The surface may not be marred. The work of the invader may not be seen. But character that is furrowed by the worm of vice is not able to withstand the tossing billows of the wind. A plausible appearance satisfies the casual observer; but the storm reveals the worm if it is there. Worm-eaten fibre always falls to the ground, "broken and without remedy." In my friend's garden that day after the storm I remembered the question, "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" Not in a garden of men or trees!

“I COULD HAVE SAVED A NICKEL”

I HAVE a little friend who has a mind and way quite her own. She does her own thinking and has the courage to say what she thinks and follow her words with action. The trouble with her is a vast inexperience; a defect which time will remedy, as one figure will write her age for some time to come. And one does not mind the inexperience due to youth. My little friend, like most young people, is unconscious of her inexperience. Her father said to her one day, “Daughter, don’t you think you should make a subscription to the church?” She replied, “Yes! I can give ten cents a week.” A little later she was given the subscription card. It has squares where one can check off the weekly offering desired. It begins with ten dollars, and tapers off to five cents. She looked at the card for a moment and then said: “Daddy, I made a mistake. I could have subscribed five cents a week and saved a nickel.” And she was all for changing her subscription, but her father reasoned her out of it.

Do we really save what we keep back from our offering to Christ and His Church? It is the opinion of some that we do. But that opinion finds no justification in Scripture or in the experience of passing generations. It may be that five cents a week would be a rather generous offering from my little friend.

Its value is more than the two mites of the widow, so highly rated by the Master. But her reasoning was defective. The fact of moral responsibility was not on her horizon; or, if so, but faintly. But failure to meet our debt to the Church of Christ is not thrift. Withholding from Him is not saving. Our responsibility is determined by our ability. Some could check off the ten-dollar square more equitably than she the ten-cent. We lose sight of the law, "From each according to his ability." The pagan says, "What I possess is mine!" The Christian says, "What I possess is God's, held for Him in trust." My little friend was reasoning from the pagan point of view.

Many Christians are guilty of her fault without having her moral alibi. Paul was speaking to grown-ups when he said, "When I became a man I put away childish things." One day I was urging certain moral considerations on a man and he turned on me, saying, "O well, now I am not so bad! I pay my debts." I replied, "I wonder if you really do!" He made no immediate response, but I saw in his face the wonder that was in his mind. I think it was true that he paid his debts to his fellow men. But he seemed oblivious to the vital truth that our obligation to our fellow men is only the reflection of our obligation to our heavenly Father. The community that allows moral responsibility to fade out will also find contract values sinking to the vanishing point. There is something to think about in what the prophet said to Israel when that people had been "saving a nickel" from the tithes and offerings.

WAYFARERS

IN a corner of one of our smaller parks is a great bronze statue of Charles Dickens. He is seated, and below him, standing at his feet, is a statue of Little Nell, his most beloved character. Perhaps the master has recalled her from her wanderings to assure her of his love; or it may be she has sought him out to ask for the happiness that had been so illusive. Her shoes are worn with long travel. Her loose hair falls down over her shoulders and her coarse dress is tied with a cord around her waist. An old shawl is thrown over her left arm and she is looking ever so wistfully up into his face. The great author is looking tenderly down into the face of this beloved child of his fancy. Perhaps the artist was attempting to put in bronze the hour of decision for the fate of this child. It is said that hundreds of letters reached Dickens, when his famous story was running as a serial, appealing to him not to let Nell die. I found my emotions stirred as I sat on a near-by bench and gave myself up to sympathetic contemplation of the reproduction in bronze of a spiritual and literary masterpiece; and I reread from my pocket edition of the wayfaring and death of little Nell. I think I had never before realized how deeply Dickens penetrated spiritual things.

I remembered, as I looked into the bronze face of the novelist, the letter he wrote to his son, a lad of

sixteen, who was going out a wayfarer to Australia. "I put a New Testament among your books," he wrote, "for the very same reason and with the very same hopes that made me write an account of it for you when you were a child. Because it is the best book that ever was or ever will be known and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty can possibly be guided. As your brothers have gone away one by one I have written to each such words as I am now writing to you and have entreated them all to guide themselves by this book, putting aside the interpretations and inventions of men. You will understand the better that I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian religion as it came from Christ Himself."

It was good to realize that this master of fiction knew so well the paths of real life. He not only knew how to deal with the children of his imagination, but those also of his own flesh; both were wayfarers. Dickens loved the little girl of his fancy whose life was so full of tragedy and pathos imposed by others. He would have saved her life, but she was beyond his power to save because of the mistakes and sins of men. The greatness of the story is seen in this. With moral earnestness he was directing the feet of his own son away from the paths of tragedy and sorrow. I think a new sense of the importance of conduct came to me there before that bronze representation of the author contemplating his weary little wayfarer. Conduct is the important thing.

A DARK ROAD AND A PAIR OF PLIERS

ONCE upon a time, as stories used to begin, desire and opportunity merged for me and a party of friends for an afternoon in the open. Crossing the Delaware River bridge, the wonder of which increases with every transit, we made our way out along the Jersey roads to Pemberton, past which the Rancocas flows. What a fascinating stream that is! Its dark water having escaped from the discolouring swamp loiters in eddies, tumbles over mill-dams and flows joyously until its poetry and romance are drowned in the tides of the Delaware. The spirit of adventure inclined us here to take the road across the Jersey plains. For miles and yet more miles it runs through the weirdest country of the East. Scrub oak and scrub pine form a scant covering for what was, in pre-historic days, sand dunes. Mile after mile the road turns not to the right or left, but rises and falls over the wave-like convolutions of sand. High Point affords a wonderful view of the wilderness. As far as the eye can reach there is no sign of habitation or of any work of man except that road which has been cut through the wilderness straight as the flight of an arrow. In that wilderness the world of men and strife seemed far off. Pursuing our way we came out ultimately on the shore road at Barnegat. Turning north to Toms River we struck inland again toward Lakehurst. It was

growing dark and occasional drops of rain were falling from a heavily overcast sky. A clamour suddenly arose for supper and we drew up by the roadside in the woods and enjoyed what it requires a lover of nature to enjoy, supper in the open. It is a delightful experience to have night, dark, stormy, mysterious, envelop you in the woods.

I am slow in getting to my objective, but our course was also a long way round. We were contentedly telling off the miles homeward when I suddenly had a sickening sensation. Before the company could say in chorus, "What is that?" I knew my right rear tire was flat. In that same instant I remembered that my flash and trouble lights were both safely stowed away at home. But a driver knows how, or ought to, even in the dark; and the way to do a disagreeable thing is to do it. Things went along all right until I found the lug was screwed down tight on the valve stem. I needed pliers. I went to the pocket where I carried them, but they were not there. I commended myself for my wisdom in carrying a second pair, a present from a Pittsburgh friend. But alas, these were gone also. But I still had a hammer and chisel, and with these primitive implements I slowly and laboriously removed the tight lug.

The commercial value of pliers is insignificant, but their value to me that night was very great. On my way home I kept thinking of those who take things that do not belong to them, like pliers and reputations, and leave folks stranded and at their wit's end by the wayside in the dark.

“WHAT DOES A-T-H-E-I-S-M SPELL?”

ON the door of my study warnings are posted against intrusion into the precincts where my books live and my fugitive thoughts submit to something of form and order under the stress and pressure of spiritual and mental fires. That room has been a source of distress to an orderly housekeeper; but what are a few books and magazines scattered about the floor if they are lying there at my bidding, holding ideas captive until I can use them? Scraps of paper may be rubbish serving only to clutter a table or a desk to wielders of the broom; but often these same scraps of paper are the bonds that retain a suggestion so ready to take wings unless fettered. Chairs are not always to sit in. Frequently they are receptacles for documents, books or pages torn from magazines. Guests may stand, but these must be treated with great hospitality. So on my door are appeals rising to the ardour of commands.

But there have always been those who failed to read the notices or were not afraid to disregard the warnings; among them the boys who have lived at the manse. They used my study as a play room when they so desired. Here they spent hours reading and browsing inquiringly as boys will. One day one of these boys was labouring with a book far beyond his years over in a corner of the study. He was sitting on

the floor and the book was open across his legs. He had come to a new word, and, as usual, I was his dictionary. Disregarding any problem I might be having with a big word myself, he said to me: "Daddy, what does a-t-h-e-i-s-m spell?" I do not remember what I was wrestling with that day, but I saw in the question an opportunity of large dimensions. That word took on new proportions as my own lad spelled it out to me and asked for its meaning.

I sat down beside him on the floor and did my best to get on his level otherwise and tell him what a-t-h-e-i-s-m really spelled. I told him that atheism meant "without God"; an atheist one who denied the existence of God, one who lived as if God did not exist. That is a dangerous suggestion to be planted in a child's life. I could see he was surprised. So I told him for a man to disbelieve in God did not hurt God, but it did hurt the man who shut his mind and heart against God; and it hurt his family. Atheism does not get rid of God except for a few foolish years. So I told him that a-t-h-e-i-s-m really spelled unhappiness, failure, sorrow! Nobody can ever get away from God. We can fail to get the happiness and strength God wants us to have in living with Him. Then I tried to spell Christ out on that background created in his mind. As I think back now and recall memories of the lad who has gone, I am more than glad that he knew the signs on the door were mostly bluff and not at all meant for him. The warnings against intrusion dissolve in the light of need.

A HUNDRED PER CENT. LAWLESS

A FEW days ago it happened I was thrown with a group of men who were discussing some of the issues of the campaign. Listening to their conversation I discerned they did not belong to the Methodist Conference nor were they affiliated with the Presbyterian Assembly. The Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Law were the targets for their verbal attacks. They were having a good time, and, as they thought, the Amendment and Law had a bad time. They knew how to use words and they were making the most of their ability. No one present seemed to know the telling facts on the other side or had the temerity to enter the lists. Or it might be the futility of argument was apparent to others as it was to me. They were shooting the Amendment full of holes, and yet, as I saw it, not one of their verbal missiles reached the mark.

"It cannot be enforced," they were saying, "and therefore the law should be repealed. The violation of law breeds contempt for law!" Very well; suppose we repeal it and let the violators have their way. But the argument and precedent go further. There are laws against the traffic in narcotics which are outrageously violated, and therefore should be repealed! Here comes some fellow who needs a bulb for his rear light. It costs a quarter and my car is unlocked and the bulb in my dash fits, so he lifts it. Another chap

needed a rotor, and instead of going to those who sell and buying for himself, he took the one out of my engine and left me stranded. Thieves are abroad. They steal automobiles, merchandise, and everything unguarded. Clerks steal from the stock and servants from the pantry. The law against stealing is violated from one end of the land to the other. It should be repealed. There is a law against gambling. But gambling flourishes in parlours and in dives. Even some charitable institutions resort to gambling devices and methods for the sake of revenue. There is only one thing to do! Repeal the law against gambling. There are laws against giving and receiving bribes. But they are violated on a small scale by most everybody and on a big scale by a surprisingly large number. Repeal the law!

When we come to think of it, the rank and file of people do not like the Decalogue. It restricts conduct. It infringes personal liberty! It limits action. It stirs up resentment because it "commands" and "prohibits." It attempts to interfere with things the individual wants to do. Anyway it was imposed without our consent. So the Decalogue should be repealed! It is, through continual violation, an incentive to lawlessness. And when we get done repealing laws that are flouted we will have a lawless country in a very real way. Every man will do that which is right in his own eyes after the manner of the jungle, or as they did in Israel in that unhappy period when there was no law. Violators of law are satisfied with no law except the law of their own desires.

“ I DIDN'T HAVE THE FACTS! ”

IT was only recently that a certain disaster claimed the attention of the American public. The papers were filled with gruesome details and the public mind was inflamed. It was easy to hand out condemnation to those in responsible positions. A well-known man acting on first impulse prepared an address in which he made serious charges and reflections and drew conclusions. But it occurred to him on second thought that before he delivered the address or gave it to the press he should make first-hand investigation, which he did. That speech was not delivered or given out for publication as he had intended. Speaking of the matter later he said, “ I didn't have the facts when I prepared my address.” Being a good citizen and an honest man he withheld the speech written without the facts; and which proved in part to be contrary to the facts.

He lost any thrill there may be in delivering an inflaming speech to an inflamed public mind, but he had the better rewards of discretion. Speech without knowledge can never be more than the beating of drums. Real eloquence rises out of knowledge. Literature that lives must be true. There are those who think they shall be heard for their much speaking, but they are wrong. They are not remembered after the sound of their words dies away. The man who

speaks without knowledge is a demagogue and a liability on the common good. A minister recently attacked our missionary boards. He did not take the trouble to find out first if his facts were real or mere figments, but proceeded to write barbed accusations against men whose reputation was their capital. What a privilege it is to be one's own censor, to keep watch over one's own statements, to let God set the door-keeper of one's own lips. But he did none of these things. It therefore became the duty of others to censor his words; and, finding them false, to heap condemnation on his head. All the rest of his life he must bear the odium of having sent out to the world statements that were not true about his brethren and his Church.

The damage that is done by speaking without knowing can never be set down this side of the great day. In my earlier ministry I found it easy to find fault with those who had been elevated to leadership. I read a journal that lived by its opposition to those who were appointed to lead in the extension of the Master's work. But one day I formed a belated purpose to know the facts for myself. I discovered that the men who were heading up the work of the Church in the world were truly men of God. Like the rest of us they make mistakes. Like most of us they are ready to make amends. I now recall with regret any alignment with those who hindered. Nothing more illuminating was ever said by the enemies of our Lord than this: "Never man spake like this man!" He always had the facts.

“MY PILOT KNEW HIS BUSINESS!”

RECENTLY a friend had occasion, or thought he had, to make a hurried trip across the country. When we really want to do something we can usually find an excuse that looks like a real reason. He likes to do the unusual, and never having been in the air, he decided to have a real experience. Going to the airport in Los Angeles he engaged passage in the mail ship to New York. These planes carry but one passenger in addition to the five or six hundred pounds of mail. There was scant room for him to wedge himself in the cockpit. A parachute was fitted on him in preparation for a possible hasty leap into the open sky with nothing more substantial between him and the solid ground than fleecy clouds. A queer sensation went over this man of the earth as he was fitted with the paraphernalia of the sky.

Taking off Friday he crossed the Mohave Desert and the Great Basin lying between the Sierras and the Rockies and landed at Salt Lake City. Changing ships and pilots he was soon off across the vast ranges of the Rocky Mountains. Here night came on, but the sky was bright with the full moon. The ranges did not seem so imposing from that cockpit as they do from the Pullman window. At Cheyenne the mountain plane and pilot were exchanged, this time for the flight to Chicago. From Chicago heavy

weather was encountered. But having the sky for his limit the pilot climbed until he was out in the sunlight with a sea of mobile clouds beneath. They skimmed along like a swift boat on the ocean. Far down under that ocean was the earth with her cities, homes and institutions for which the letters in the cockpit were destined. Occasionally they came to a range of clouds rising far above the surface on which they were traveling. As the pilot climbed to the new altitude the engine speeded up like an automobile taking an easy grade. But the sky and clouds furnished no landmarks. Suddenly the pilot turned the nose of his ship down into that ocean. They were quickly enveloped in fog which sight could not penetrate. My friend admitted he was startled as they plunged headlong into the dark. "It looked dangerous," he said, "but I had discovered that my pilot knew his business." Having picked up such information as he wanted from the rain-drenched earth, he climbed back into the sunlight. By and by the storm was past and the ship floated low through the Alleghenies, at times following valleys with mountains rising on either side. He landed safely in the afternoon at New York.

It was a fascinating story told in sections now and again as he recalled his experiences. He left no doubt that he believed in his pilot. Life has aspects much like that voyage across the continent. In the unknown reaches of the years we too have to depend on a pilot. I was glad to remember the One who never makes a miscalculation and is never taken by surprise when fog obscures the way.

“ I AM A MAN OF LEISURE NOW! ”

THIS is what one of our capable and industrious men said to me the other day. I was surprised to meet him in the afternoon sauntering along the street. When I expressed my surprise he told me that he had been “ let out ” and had not been able to find other employment, and was therefore a man of leisure. He discussed the problem of unemployment from the point of view of the unemployed. Most of what he said I was familiar with; for one of the first men to discover the fact of unemployment in the community is the minister; misfortune of almost every sort finds its way to the manse. Unemployment is a real misfortune and as such taxes the best thought of our leading men. The minister helps when and as he can; but he is in a position to do but little. There is always a problem of the unemployed for there are always those unwilling to work. But the problem becomes acute only when capable men are unemployed.

But my friend was dispassionate in discussing the matter albeit he himself was caught between the upper and nether millstones. He felt an adjustment would come. The pendulum had swung too far in one direction, he said, and it must therefore swing too far in the other. He discussed vast fortunes on the one hand and extreme poverty on the other. He referred to the stock markets out of which a few days before

some men had extracted riches, while he was unable to earn his daily bread. He dryly observed, however, that the same stock markets had made others poor. Some of our citizens die so rich that it is a real problem to administer their estates. Others have difficulty to meet the bills that arise from the most frugal house-keeping. In the same city where some scarcely know what to do with their money, others in every essential way their equals, are at their wit's end to make ends meet. To-day our unemployment is different in that it co-exists with the prosperity of our larger industries. Unemployment challenges the nation. We must find a solution for poverty, disease and social unrest follow in its wake. My friend had confidence there was wisdom enough and honesty enough and courage enough to find the solution. In the answer we are all vitally interested; for the common good is ultimately the good of us all.

Has the Gospel any message for this problem? It surely has; for it has flooded the world with moral truth. Its light has revealed these things as problems which must be solved, where formerly they were unnoticed. The Gospel has given the doctrine of human brotherhood and the Golden Rule. These point the way. But my friend's discussion brought to mind the fact of spiritual unemployment so rife, which passes as a matter of course. What throngs of Christians are spiritually unemployed! It is said that we are only 10 per cent. efficient spiritually! Where are the nine? It is a great evil; and the Master is still saying, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

“ I MADE A BAD MISTAKE! ”

I WAS with a group of men recently who were talking of the stock market. Much of what they were saying was Sanskrit to me, but the drift of the conversation was clear enough. They were talking of margins, reserves, excited markets, exploitations, underlyers, holding companies and other strange things. It was evident that these men were living in a world where they had to make decisions involving large interests without having any very definite information on which to base their decisions. Their best judgment was often little better than a shrewd guess. When the price of a certain stock was mentioned one of these men said: “I made a big mistake when I sold that stock.” It seems he had owned a large block, but had sold it months ago. Now that stock is high, and the speaker was much disconcerted because he felt he had let a fortune slip through his fingers by a mistaken judgment.

I was not seriously impressed by the sense of loss that possessed him, for it was purely hypothetical. It is a matter of indifference to the public whether he had made or lost a fortune on the market. The community is not better or worse in either case. Real value is not in what a man has, but in what he is. A good man is a community's best asset and this sort of value is neither won nor lost on the market. One is not under

the necessity of depending on a shrewd guess to make this gain. Life may be a fairy tale written by the finger of God, as Hans Andersen suggests, but we have much to do with the writing. We can help God make the tale what God would have it be, or we can interfere with God's high motive and mix the story with regret or even break it off. That was a great suggestion made by the Apostle in dealing with the real values of life when he spoke of our Lord as the Prince of Life. It has been said that the expression might be rendered the "File Leader of Life"! In any case the Prince must have subjects and the Leader followers. God seems to have conditioned Himself by our willingness for Him to work with us for these high values. Here is where mistakes are made that put into eclipse any mistaken guess of the stock market.

That discussion suggested a case where more than a fortune was missed. Perhaps it came to me because of the proximity of Palm Sunday. Not an individual, but a city made the mistake. No such opportunity had ever come to that city before. The world's Spiritual King came riding through her streets, attested and acclaimed! But for paltry reasons they refused Him. It was out of full knowledge of the consequences in defeat and suffering that this same Spiritual King said of their decision, "If thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace!" That city let her interest in the Kingdom of God go for stock in a kingdom that had no value and no future. And that is the great mistake men have been making as the generations pass. It estops God!

"THE FACT ON WHICH WE BUILD"

"LET me tell you how it seems to me," he said as he lay on the narrow bed in the hospital. His mother had gone out for a little fresh air and rest from the strain of the long, anxious hours. Friends had come suggesting an hour in the open as a needful thing; so she had gone. With the sick lad was one who had shared both his joys and sorrows. I was welcomed by them both and asked to remain until the guardian angel in the guise of mother should return. I was glad to stay for I was conscious of my place in their affection as they were sure of mine. So I sat at his bedside when he was in a mood to talk things out. My experience with those long sick has made me sensitive to such times. I kept wondering if the lad knew his real condition. If so he disguised it well; and yet in that conversation he led me into fields that would indicate he was getting matters fixed on which he would later depend when earth should fall away from him. Or it may have been the gracious Spirit having His way. He was speaking to me as his friend.

So it happened that this youth on whom death had laid claim had something to say; and the older man by his bedside was ready to listen with an ear that really hears. "Religion that is worth anything," he said, "is love to God and trust in Christ. All these other things that folks call religion are something else. I

see that clearly now. These other things are brought in by men and added to what Christ brought. They come, I believe, from our sectarian way of thinking. They may or may not be right but they are not essential. I think it is wrong to keep on always stressing non-essentials. The fact on which we must build is Christ. He opened up the future. I am glad to follow Him." He said many other things, but there was no complaint against the order that was exacting such toll of his flesh. My heart went out to the lad so wracked with pain and with the shadow of death across his handsome face. Later on, when he had gone still further down the lane into the deeper shadow, he said: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." So we laid him away on the Monday of Passion Week while the sun was flooding the landscape and calling forth anew the life of the trees and flowers! And we were all thinking of Easter so soon to come, and the Christ out of whom our hope dawns and on whom we build.

While I was saying, "earth to earth," the flowers and the open grave seemed to dissolve before my eyes and I saw again the pale face on the pillow and his words reëchoed in my heart, "The fact on which we must build is Christ." Approaching the great Exodus he had it right. Our Lord left a light in the darkness which reveals the path through. That path is marked, even though it be narrow, by the glow of His own Exodus. He came forth on that first Easter morn radiant, glorified. We shall be like Him. So, with my youthful teacher, I am glad to follow Him!

A LAND OF THE SEA

LONG ISLAND offers a delightful variety of experiences without the usual long journeys. Within a few miles she changes her moods. It is a great finger of land reaching out into the Atlantic between the choppy waters of the sound and the rolling surges of the ocean. It is doubtful if another place could be found with such varied form and expression. On the north the shore is bold, with many jutting headlands and deep bays. Here are great estates and beautiful drives skirting the shore with occasional glimpses of the sound. Along this shore one finds many places of great interest. Here William Cullen Bryant lived and worked and finds sepulchre. A great boulder marks the spot where Nathan Hale was captured by the British. Oyster Bay is a mecca for pilgrims and will remain so through the love America holds for the memory of Roosevelt. The south shore is different. The sea rolls in on her sandy shore which reaches for more than a hundred miles without hill or vale. But nature has placed a narrow ribbon of sand miles out to temper the fury of the sea.

The end of the island is different. Montauk Point is a rugged, storm-beaten hill. The way takes you through the Hamptons where there are many wonderful estates. In Easthampton the road passes the vine-covered cottage where Howard Paine was born. For

the last dozen miles the road is unimproved and takes its narrow, tortuous way over and between sand-dunes thrown up by the storms of centuries, miniature wind-gaps. The Point looks the part. It is a storm-scarred hill, bearing the marks of wind and wave. Out where you feel you are coming to land's end some one has established a splendid flock of sheep. A field has been prepared for them at great expense in a sheltered valley plentifully provided with grass. As we went out the sheep were feeding in separated groups, while the shepherd and his dog kept watch. On our return, which had been hastened by a threatening storm, we were privileged to see the lone shepherd and his dog bring the sheep into the fold. Notwithstanding the approaching night and storm we watched this suggestive sight away out there on the storm-scarred point of land. The shepherd had taken a position where the dog could see him at any place in the field. With his hand and voice he directed the movements of that wonderful dog galloping around the flock urging them on to the fold. When the last animal was inside he lay down at his master's feet evidently conscious of a real service rendered.

Making our way back in the gathering night through the estates and villages and open spaces of the island, the storm broke upon us. As the torrents of rain pelted the car and flooded the road I was thinking of the flock of sheep back in their fold and of the shepherd and his dog. Of course, I remembered also the Great Shepherd and His care and enfolding love as described by the shepherd king in his immortal poem.

"HE DOES NOT PLAY THE GAME"

I ONCE had an interview with the principal of a noted school for boys in behalf of a boy who was about to be expelled. He had been in trouble on several former occasions, but had escaped severe punishment. But now things were looking bad for him; in fact, expulsion had already been voted by the student council and it only remained for the principal to put it into effect. I saw the boy, talked with him and found him a likeable fellow. He admitted he had done wrong and wanted very much to be given another chance. He kept saying, "I did not mean any harm"; and I am sure he did not. The principal was fair and willing to talk the case over with me although he had gone over it many times before. He showed me the boy's record in his classes as well as in conduct, and the opinion of the headmaster. I saw the verdict of his fellow students who sat in judgment in his case. The principal finally said: "This boy is a bright student and a good fellow, but he is a bad citizen. He forgets about others and does things that upset the school. For the good of the school he must go. He does not and will not, it seems, play the game."

I had gone out to intercede for the boy in behalf of his father. I was anxious, naturally, to accomplish what the father wanted, but there was no appealing

from the facts. The principal kept saying, "He does not play the game." No boy has the right to destroy the morale of a school, whoever he may be or whoever his father may be. That afternoon the document of expulsion was signed and the school closed against him. A brilliant boy, from a good home, with a bright future apparently open to him! But he wouldn't play the game. After I had examined the records and talked with the boy the principal said: "What would you do if you were the principal of this school?" There was but one answer to that question.

As I drove home that night over well built roads through a prosperous country, all of which is the product of men who play the game, I kept thinking of the boy who would not. Everything we have that is worth while comes from working with others, thinking of others, doing something for others. The man who will not play the game brings weakness and trouble. There are no rules of the road or laws of life that bind him. And I thought of how the Church suffers from bad citizenship; Christians who do not play the game. When I reached home I sent a wire to that boy's father explaining that my mission was futile. The boy that meant no harm had nevertheless brought sorrow to his parents and confusion to his own life by ignoring the rights and responsibilities of others. Our Lord must have had this in mind when He said to His disciples, "Others have laboured and ye are entered into their labours." He asks that real men play the game with each other and with Him.

“ HE DID HIS BEST ”

A GREAT snowstorm had blocked the streets and lanes and when Sunday came the sky was still sifting down its burden upon the already buried landscape. Trees, fences and buildings were festooned with snowy figures, and the world was beautiful to look upon. But traveling through snow-blocked lanes is a very different matter, and the minister of a certain little chapel was not able to keep his appointment because of the snow; and for that matter neither were the members of the congregation. When the time came to open the service there were but ten or twelve persons in the congregation. The minister not being present, a member of the congregation was drafted to take the service. The lot fell upon a small, spare man, a shoemaker, and he accordingly went into the pulpit to conduct the service and preach as best he could. Whatever may have been the quality of the sermon that morning, the text was excellent; for the man of the awl chose God's appeal voiced by the prophet: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Judged by ordinary standards that service would not rank high. But in that little Wesleyan chapel that snowy day one of the worth-while events of history came to pass; and services must be judged by the values that flow out of them. In the congregation was

a lad of twelve or fourteen years. He was on his way to another service, but on account of the snow had turned into this little chapel. In writing about it afterwards the boy said the speaker preached but a few minutes, that he misused his words and gave other evidence of limited ability. But he drove the truth of the text into the mind and heart of the boy who that day gave his heart to God. That boy was Charles H. Spurgeon, than whom there have been few greater ambassadors for the Kingdom. Mr. Spurgeon gives full and explicit credit to the illiterate preacher for his conversion that snowy day in the little primitive chapel. He did his best in a situation that promised little.

Fancy would reconstruct that service and repeat the sermon, but it has melted out with the snow which was responsible for it. But the honour connected with that service is found in the willingness of a poorly prepared man to do the best he could in the face of need. He was willing to brave the criticism of those who could not do any better; or were not willing to try. And is this not just the point at which we so often fail? Here was a man willing to do a small thing for God in an imperfect way. It proved to be a big thing. All unknown to himself he had come to a great hour and had been used of God in a great event. Was there not something of this in the willingness of Paul to be “a fool” for Christ’s sake? But he never was; nor is any man ever a fool who does the best he knows in the time of need.

“ I NEVER HEARD OF HER ”

“ I WONDER where mother lived? Was it out this street or that? Did she ever stand in front of that old store and look at the pretty things in the window, just as that girl is doing now? There is an old tree; maybe she stood under it on a hot summer day.” I was trying to go back through the years and visualize my mother in her girlhood, as I stood for the first time in her native town. Kodaks are modern and daguerreotypes were expensive, so I never saw a picture of my mother in her youth. When we came into the little town in South Carolina that has the honour of being her native place, I found myself strangely interested. I thought of how much had happened between her leaving her girlhood home and my arrival there. I thought of her pioneer work in that southern state, of the venturesome migration to Indiana prior to the war and again of that memorable journey in wagons to the virgin prairie lands of Eastern Kansas. In that little city a new appraisalment of my mother swept through my mind. What an indomitable spirit was hers!

I had often wished for an opportunity to visit her native place, and now it had come incidentally on our care-free way to the North. As I brought the car, covered with the red dust of South Carolina, to a stop in the main street, I felt a well-nigh irresistible impulse to go searching about in the hopeless task of

finding where she had lived. Accosting a citizen, I asked where was one who knew the past of the community. Without hesitation he directed me to a store on the corner. It proved to be a variety store. On entering I felt that I had stumbled into Old Curiosity Shop. Everything was there in disorder. Thick dust had been sifted from a long past over the ancient wares. I found the proprietor pleasant and interested in my quest. I asked him if he had ever heard of the Fullertons, Margaret Fullerton; but he had never heard the name and was sure that there was no one in the county of the name and had not been for half a century. Her very name had faded out of the community that nurtured her. Forgotten!

But in thinking of Mother, time and place do not hold any great importance. It all depends on who forgets. No one realized more clearly than she that externals must crumble. “ They shall wax old as doth a garment and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up.” How often at her knee have I heard her tell of the keeping love of God. She had no ambition to be remembered by the communities where she had lived. Self-effacement was her policy. None would have been more surprised than she if anything had remained of her memory in her native place. She had more than her share of hardship, but she was always forgetting those things which were behind, and looking forward to those things which were before. The goodness of God was real to her. The universe, she believed, was friendly whatever her hardships. And she was happy in the truth that God does not forget.

"PLEASE TELL THE OTHERS"

GEORGIA roads are among the best and the worst, with every variety in between. We had mostly the best to-day from the old city of St. Augustine to that other old city, Savannah. We traveled through long stretches of turpentine forest dripping its sticky, pungent liquid from a thousand wounds into as many receptacles. There were miles of wonderful live oak heavily draped with the grey mantle of Spanish moss. The cypress swamp added a weird variety, stately trees growing from the water and forming a canopy through which the sun broke in blotches on the quiet surface. Much of the way was delightful wilderness. We passed the old Midway Church, an ancient landmark. The two-story building is 130 years old; the original log structure having been built in 1754. It was the first house of worship the Puritans erected in Georgia. The forbears of Theodore Roosevelt are buried in the churchyard and two signers of the Declaration of Independence came from this settlement.

Savannah is one of our most interesting cities, her history dating from 1733. In February of that year Oglethorpe and his companions pitched their tents on the ground where the city now stands. It was here that John Wesley preached his first sermon in America and established the first Sunday School on this continent. In the manse of the Presbyterian Church,

modeled on St. Martin's-in-the-field, Woodrow Wilson was married. Here the first American golf course was laid out and the first steamship to cross the Atlantic left port. After supper we were sitting on the veranda when the chimes of a near-by church began to repeat the old hymns. How like the voice of the Church those chimes seemed! The tones, floating out over the city in the still evening, were vibrant with spiritual meaning. The church was open and we went over thinking we were going to a mid-week service. It was a beautiful church, richly equipped.

It was a service in the interest of the Every Member Canvass, with the bishop as the guest and speaker. He spoke earnestly about the deficit of the past year and urged that the men in charge should make a real every member canvass. He called attention to the fact that some who subscribed last year had not paid their subscription; some in part and some nothing. He expressed his regret that so few people were present. "That is the way it always is!" he was saying. "I must depend on you faithful people here to spread the word and persuade others to help. Won't you please tell the others the things they ought to be hearing for themselves? Only as you earnest people repeat the message and kindle the spirit can the church carry on." At the close of this day spent in the great open spaces I was glad to be brought back to the moral issues that make roads and business and homes possible. It was a meeting of another church family, not intended for outsiders, but I felt comfortably at home with them in the feeling that our task is one.

PAGEANTRY IN THE DARKNESS

JUST a little way off the road that leads down through the Shenandoah are caverns where nature has wrought an imposing exhibition in form and colour in dark chambers where the light of the sun has never penetrated. Out under the sky is the beautiful valley of Virginia. The river makes a way through it, creating scenes of exquisite beauty. Mountains are on either side, the Blue Ridge forming the eastern boundary with Massanutten rising like a giant sentinel. The Indians called this valley the Shenandoah. And the name is beautiful as a name; but to the Indian it meant Daughter of the Stars. Through this valley the armies fought back and forth during the Civil War. But long before that it was the scene of adventure. For a long time the Indian allowed no white man to enter the valley, but finally he had to yield his Daughter of the Stars!

But the Indian never knew of the wonders beneath his valley and running back under the dark mountains. Even now these caverns have not been fully explored. What an experience it is to follow the winding course from chamber to chamber! The way through which we walked was at one time the channel of a river through which the water foamed and churned. Where that river came from and where it went the wise do not suggest. The top of the chambers is marked by the

cutting edge of the current as distinctly as the sides. What a wild, mad thing it must have been in that dark course! Fantastic shapes are cut along the way. It twisted and turned; it went over falls and climbed again the ascent. It had all sorts of eddies and pockets. Here and there were evidences of a wild whirlpool that ground the sides and top of the cavern as with a vast tool.

But long ago that river deserted its channel. The chambers are silent enough now. A bit of a stream may be seen at one point, perhaps a hundred feet below the level on which we stood. It sparkles on its way somewhere as the light is thrown down to it. The caverns are now ornate with formations, weird and beautiful beyond words to describe. Works of art they are, wrought in the pitchy dark chambers with no tool to shape or brush to colour but the dripping water. No sound was ever heard in the building of these imposing structures. More silently have they come together than the Temple of Solomon. And how long it has been! Egypt and Tyre were but last night. Drop after drop fell, and the beautiful pendants came into being; stately columns rose from the floor. There seemed no limit to the forms the fancy of the dripping water might take. "How long has it been?" one asked. "It is estimated that it requires 200 years to form a cubic inch," was the reply. Then time runs into millions of years since the river deserted its way and the dripping water began the creation of this vast pageantry. A thousand years are but a day in the dark caverns of the Daughter of the Stars!

A COMPLIMENTARY VOTE FOR GOD!

I HAD been out Thursday evening making some after-supper calls. Sometimes we have dinner in the evening, but that evening I happen to remember it was supper. Notice is seldom given which it is to be and there seems to be no rule by which we may expect one or the other. The best way, I find, is to accept either with thanksgiving and proceed with the events of the evening. I had asked some friends to go with me for the drive. A car rides better when it has ballast and I feel selfish with the back seat empty on a pleasant evening. After my calls were made we kept on out into the country. A beautiful evening was merging into night as we drifted down a wooded hill into a deep valley through which Darby Creek flows. I knew a little-frequented road which we took from that valley back into the city streets. I had come home expecting to do some work in my study, but when I opened the door I knew I wouldn't. A voice from Kansas City was proclaiming the virtues of a great American.

The speaker was talking to the National Republican convention. I suppose he was quite oblivious to any other audience than the thousand or so delegates. But millions or so were listening in through the mysterious ministry of the radio. So I sat down and the earlier purpose vanished. And the hours went by. Many

impassioned words were spoken in presenting the names of various men for the high office of the Presidency of the United States. And the radio flung them, good and bad, within reach of every home in the land. Eleven o'clock came and midnight and one in the morning. Still they talked on. Skillful orators were using every artifice to win votes. Any monotony was relieved by the side remarks and explanations of the announcer. He told us what was happening when all we heard was yells and the blare of trumpets and the pounding gavel. I wished they would get on with their task. I was beginning to wish I had stayed out along Darby Creek in the fresh night breezes.

Finally the speeches and parades were over and they began to call the roll of the States. Sovereign States were casting votes for the man whom they wished to rule this great land. Cheer after cheer arose from that hall and was carried out over the continent. In his comments the announcer said a certain block of votes cast were complimentary; they did not expect their candidate to win. The statement arrested my attention. As the roll-call went on to the end I thought of our Lord who is seeking the franchise of the souls of men. I thought of those who are saying, "We will not have this man rule us"; and of Christians who give God a complimentary vote but do not seem to mean it. Between the complacency of worldly men and the indifference of Christians whose vote for God is complimentary, the Church is having a difficult time of it. But the roll-call is going on and one imagines the pounding of God's gavel can be heard.

THE BIBLE!

THE word "bible" was applied to the Holy Scriptures for the first time in the thirteenth century. In the Latin form it was plural, meaning the books, but it came into English in the singular, meaning "the book." It is a name happily applied, for it is indeed The Book! The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New in Greek. None of the original manuscripts are now in existence. They all perished in the persecutions which were directed against the Christians. The three oldest manuscripts are the Vatican, in the Vatican library, the Sinaitic, belonging to the Greek Church, and the Alexandrian, which is in the British Museum. These all probably date back between the years 450 to 300. So we have only copies and translations. It is perfectly wonderful how these books composing the Scriptures have been preserved. While there are variations in the manuscripts there is no essential difference in any manuscript or translation.

Toward the close of the fourth century the old Latin versions of the Scriptures were found to be so faulty that Jerome was chosen by the Church to prepare a uniform copy. This was called the Latin Vulgate. It was a great work and of vast importance. This is the Bible of the Roman Church. In 1563 the Council of Trent by vote placed the Vulgate on a par with the original manuscripts of the Scriptures. The same

council declared that the Vulgate was to be "used in lectures, disputations, sermons and expositions; and be held as authentic." It further declared that any persons refusing to accept the Vulgate as the Bible were to be anathematized. In 1604 King James of England authorized an English version of the Scriptures which was completed in 1611. This is spoken of by Romanists and secularists as the Protestant Bible. This is the Bible we use in our services and is generally called the Authorized Version. In 1901 the American Revised Bible was issued by a company of our greatest Christian scholars. It is undoubtedly the most correct translation of the sacred books.

The Bible is the fountain of our Christian religion. It has no rival. Our standards truly say it is the "only infallible rule of faith and practice." The Bible has never deceived or misled a human soul. It points out the evil of the great men who move through its pages, and warns against it. Its men are real men. Those who challenge the Bible are forced to admit that it is never misleading morally or spiritually. Coming down the ages, it holds forth spiritual truth in such a way that a dean in one of our great universities said: "The Bible is the only truthful book in the world." It was given to throw light on the pathway of life. It was prepared to set forth the life and ministry and death of Christ. No academic question about the Bible need disturb the faith of any one, for it approves itself and has the approval of God upon it. It is God's Word approved in the ways of life.

LIFT UP YOUR EYES!

WHETHER you look down or back or up makes a great difference in what you see and in what you are. Some people seem born with a vision that falls to the earth and their horizon is restricted to the valley and day in which they live. Others look back and see nothing until it is past. There are those, however, who look up. They see the deep blue of the sky and read something of the meaning of the stars.

Some people are greatly distressed about "our evil day" and speak of the future of cherished institutions and of humanity in terms shaded with pessimism. Others seem to have a mysterious gratification that things are wrong. Religion is spoken of as having lost both zeal and power. The family is thought to be in danger of falling apart as an old building exposed to the elements. It is not difficult to see evils for they are here; but we need to lift up our eyes and look upon the wide horizon. The good old days of which we hear are apocryphal; they never existed. We forget the evil and remember the good. We cherish the thatched cottage but forget about the pig sty in the rear. It is a gracious trick memory serves us; and history practices the same deception.

It is said that a tablet has been discovered in Assyria that is 4,700 years old on which was written: "Our earth is degenerating in these latter days. There

are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end. Children no longer obey their parents. Every man wants to write a book. The end of the world is evidently approaching." How very modern all this sounds! Hugh Latimer, who was burned at the stake in 1555 because he opposed the positions of an entrenched and stalled hierarchy, has a great sermon on Christian love. In it he calls attention to the Scriptural teaching that if a man gives his body to be burned and have not love, it is of no avail. But in this sermon Latimer indicts his own day in these words: "There never was such falsehood among Christians as there is now. No man sets anything by his promise; yea, and writing will not serve with some. They are so shameless that they deny their own handwriting." Dr. Jefferson writing on "Things Fundamental" in 1903 says: "We are living in an age of mental confusion. The world is everywhere torn up. There are so many novel hypotheses, so many books, so many voices, that we are bewildered." And that was in the quiet years before the war.

How familiar to-day are these ancient worries! But let us possess our souls in patience. It is not an evidence of faith to be in constant fear for the Ark of God. It is no evidence of loyalty to God to be pessimistic of our own times. Rather let us be in mental and spiritual allegiance with Him who was the world's great Believer. He appealed to His friends to lift up their eyes. He taught us to pray, "Our Father, thy will be done on earth." That prayer is being and will be answered.

“ARE YOU AS BUSY AS THAT?”

ONE of our noted men was making an address at a state convention. He was engaged in a work that kept him on the train much of the time, going back and forth over wide areas. Frequently he was away from home weeks at a time. In his address that day he was telling busy people how unprofitably busy it is possible to be. The application of brakes to the wheels of life is often needful to keep them in some sort of reasonable control. He had returned home, he said, from a long trip; had greeted his wife and children. How glad they were to see him! How good to be at home! But when his wife was unpacking his bag she discovered some letters she had written him that had never been opened. Then he told how she brought those unopened letters to him and with her face wet with tears asked him what it meant! “Haven’t you time any more to read your wife’s letters? Are you as busy as that?”

I do not remember what he said in answer to the question or what explanation he made to her. It may well be that he had no answer at all. There are times when there is nothing much to be said in extenuation. He had hurt the heart of his wife by giving to something else the place that belonged to her. She read in the unopened letters the legible evidence of neglect. The unbroken seals suggested to her heart that she

was secondary; that in some measure he was indifferent to what was going on at home. Perhaps he had not meant to be so busy that even through forgetfulness this thing could happen. But there she stood with the unopened letters and what could he say to silence the indictment of the unbroken seals?

There is something of this in the way some people treat God's letters. The seal is often unbroken. When we reach the end of the journey and lay down our luggage it will be hard to explain the fact of these unopened letters. Nothing that we have been doing, however important it may seem in the hurry of life, can ever be a valid reason for the unbroken seals on our Father's letters. Some read a chapter here or there or lay hold on a verse now and again, and think they have broken the seal. But that is not the way we read other letters! God's letters have been wrested in this way and made to mean what the reader wants them to mean. Only as we read open-mindedly can we know His plans or discover the reason and way of moral integrity. Suppose Timothy had failed to break the seal of that immortal letter Paul wrote him, the last Paul ever wrote! It would have been an irreparable blunder on his part and a sin against the world of men. Besides it will be awkward when we reach home not to know about the people and things of which God has written. A great literary man declared that he who knew not the men of the Scriptures was provincial. Besides all this it must hurt the heart of God to find His letters unopened when we get home. Are you really as busy as that?

ALWAYS IMPROVING THE BEST

PERFECTION is only apparent, not real, in human experience. The best is always being improved or supplanted. Candles were improved in the time of our fathers until they approached the ideal. Holders were elaborated until they were beautifully ornamental. The sway of the candle is still acknowledged in our use of "candle-power" as a measure of light. But all the fine perfections went to the antique shop on the advent of the kerosene lamp. After a brief reign this too was superseded, with all its artistic development, by the electric light. Who can be satisfied with the present best without committing himself to the tallow-dip or the kerosene lamp?

I am thinking of the Church of Christ and her equipment. It used to be the way to pass a subscription paper once a year. Substantial members were seen and the rest were passed over with a gesture. There was no set time for the redemption of the pledge, nor was it regarded as a very serious obligation. After this came the weekly envelope system. These were sent to each home, one for each Sunday, a weekly reminder of the needs of the Church. But the envelopes were left to make their own appeal. Such funds as came in were used; what failed to come in were dispensed with. Then followed the Every Member Canvass, which provides for the visitation of every

member of the congregation without discrimination by selected visitors. The purpose of the Every Member Canvass is to secure a proportionate gift from each. These visitors present the budget both for maintenance and benevolence. This requires a willing mind and something of salesmanship. There are always misunderstandings to be cleared up, misconceptions to be corrected, indifference to be overcome. It offers a field for real salesmanship. The latest improvement on the best is a pointed message on the back of each weekly envelope. With fine intelligence moral truths are brought home to the membership of the Church. It is a sort of weekly follow-up after the visitors have done their work. We are in a modern world and the Church cannot use the outgrown methods and meet her modern obligations, or even survive.

Soon our church year will close and another open. That means a new budget and a new canvass for funds to meet it. Do any among us feel that we have arrived at the finally best? That we can write *ne plus ultra* on our methods? Surely such an opinion faces the wrong way! Men who faced and forced the fords of the Impossible brought in the kerosene lamp and the electric light. The Church has a mission vast and important. We should supply her with such funds as she needs. Consecrated salesmanship for Christ and His Cause can do it. From every one according to ability, to every cause according to need, presented in worship each week, is the ideal. Even an approximation of this ideal would meet all our local and world-wide needs. It leaves the tallow-dip far behind.

A QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

MAY the Pastor to-day arise to a question of privilege in the council of his people? If so, he would like to say a few things that have bearing on his ministry. I heard recently of the illness of a parishioner, and, making note of it, called at the earliest possible moment. In telling this I am thinking of many others. I found the member well enough to attend to the duties of the home. She had received me cordially, but told me she felt hurt that I had not called when she was sick. She related how a fellow-member of the church had called to whom she reported that I had not visited her in her sickness. Yet she said, "And I did want to see you so!" I asked her if she had sent for the physician and she said she had. When I asked her if she had sent me word, she admitted she had not. She trusted dame rumour to get word to her pastor whose ministry she said she had sorely missed. When I said, "A postal card would have brought me," she admitted her wrong. Yes, she was wrong in not letting her pastor know and in planting that bit of virus.

The task of the minister of the modern church is three-fold. First of all, he is a preacher of the Gospel. He must be a student of the Word and he must know the needs of life. The preparation of three sermons each week is enough to tax the best of minds. A re-

cent article in a magazine on pulpit work said that only a preaching genius could do what is expected of a modern minister. He should have every forenoon free from interruption to prepare his sermons and the special addresses that are so frequently called for. I find myself often at the end of the week without having had time except for the most meagre preparation for the pulpit. This is a great wrong. Then there is the task of pastoral visitation. It is an enormous, never ending, always increasing task. I find myself farther behind each week. Making eight to ten calls every day of the week, I can do little more than take care of emergency and special calls. Most ministers have long since given up any attempt at pastoral visitation. If I gave all my time to this task it would still be inadequately done. Then there is the task of administration. The modern church is an institution that requires a great deal of administrative attention. Large sums of money have to be raised for local and world-wide work. There are missionary enterprises and social responsibilities and the various lines of young people's work. There is the Sunday School, and the pastor is charged with that responsibility. Every administrative problem heads up into the pastor's study. Any failure anywhere is chargeable ultimately against him.

The pastor is asking for an understanding of his task, for such assistance as the members of the church may give, and for such information as he should have. This is his question of privilege.

“CANNOT AFFORD MISTAKES!”

THE spire of the Fourth Church in Trenton is not only the highest spire in New Jersey, but one of the most beautiful spires in the country. It lifts its graceful form well over two hundred feet above the sidewalk. It is a well-built structure and has withstood the storms of years. When winter storms rage about it, when its stately form is half obscured by driving snow, it is an imposing sight. But it always seems most beautiful to me silhouetted against the night sky when the full moon is flooding the earth with her enchantment. The softer light of the night obscures any defect the glare of day might reveal and greatly enhances every spiritual suggestion. Rising toward God from the tower of the beautiful brown stone sanctuary, it is highly suggestive of spiritual things. This spire has been an object of comment for its architectural beauty and has marked the church to which it belongs.

But there is always a price to pay for distinction, and the Fourth Church spire is no exception. It requires attention; and not every one can make repairs to so high a spire. During my pastorate in Fourth Church it became necessary to take down the old finial and replace it with another. The old one was built in and heavy and had to be taken down in pieces. This required special skill. Going up as far as possible on the inside, the steeple-jack dropped a rope on the out-

side. Then by looping ropes above him and lashing ladders to the spire he reached the top. The upper ladder reached well above the finial. On this ladder reaching up into the sky the daring workman set about his task. At times he was at the base of the finial and again clear above it, using saw, hammer and chisel from positions on the ladder. I saw him test that ladder before it was lashed to the spire and it stood the test. But as I stood in the yard watching him on that ladder above the finial, lifting on a heavy timber, the rung on which he was standing broke. With a sickening feeling I turned away expecting to hear his body crashing to the sidewalk. But he did not fall, and when I looked again he was working away. When I asked him about it after the heavy finial was on the ground he replied, "You know in my business we cannot afford to make mistakes." He had counted on the possibility of the rung breaking and was ready for that eventuality. Without mishap he made necessary repairs and put the new copper finial in place.

Many times since I have relived that moment and have remembered his words, "We cannot afford to make mistakes." Life is full of hazards. Life itself is the greatest hazard. There is no day in which the steeple-jack's words are not true of us all, "We cannot afford to make mistakes." Life's supreme mistake is to fail to take Christ into partnership in all its affairs. Jude was referring to Him when he spoke of one "Who was able to keep you from falling" when any rung breaks.

INDEX

- Age of Old Man of Mountain, 74
 Air plane, Across continent on, 157
 Allegheny river hills, 23
 Atheism, 151
- Basin, The Big, of California, 35
 Beauty, Having eyes for, 114
 Beauty, Seeing, in your own, 108
 Best, Always improving the, 185
 Best, Doing his, 169
 Bethany home, An evening in, 85
 Bible, Dickens on the, 148
 Bible, How not to read, 184
 Bible, The, 179
 Bigger man, How to be a, 112
 Boy, A, finds new word, 152
 Boy, The Minister's, 69
 Boy, The, not playing game, 167
 Boys better than dogs, 20
 Bright Angel Trail, 31
 Brown, John, 141
 Busy, Are you as, as that? 183
- Caverns, The, of Shenandoah, 175
 Christ, Foolish reasons against, 124
 Christ, The body of, 122
 Christ, The Pilot of life, 158
 Christ, The world's believer, 182
 Christmas, 135
 Christmas trees and ash carts, 139
 Christmas, What is? 49
 Church, A criticism of the, 21
 Church, Getting benefit from, 22
 Church, Putting a value on the, 63
 Church, Subscription to, 145
 Church, Corporation of Jesus, 16
 Church, The game of the, 122
 Church, Two ways to finance, 61
 Colleges, The cry against, 102
 Common things, The, of life, 26
 Communion Service, 80
 Conclusions vitiated, 100
 Confession, A young man's, 163
 Conscience, Obeying, 131
 Controversy, Unprofitable, 18
 Convention, Republican National, 178
 Country, Where town and, meet, 143
 Criticism, Willing to brave, 170
 Cups, The, we give, 118
- Day, Is our, evil? 181
 Death an incident, 92
 Decalogue, Repealing the, 154
 Depression, Antidote for, 65
 Desert, The, 37
 Dickens, Statue of, and Nell, 147
 Difficulties, How to overcome, 111
 Distinction, A price on, 189
 Dog, Teaching, bad habits, 19
 Duncan, Margaret, Story of, 103
- Easter Sunday, 164
 Education, Christian, Need of, 71
 Efficiency, The secret of, 16
 Essential, An, defined, 56
 Essentials; non-essential folly, 164
 Every Member Canvass, 174, 185
 Everywhere, Road that goes, 116
 Example, An, in suffering, 100
 Expenses, We must cut, 61
 Externals do not count, 172
 Eyes, Lift up your, 181
- Fact, The, on which we build, 163
 Facts, Not having the, 155
 Faith, Every mile by, 23
 Faults, Making, permanent, 96
 Fire Fall, The, 39
 Fishing, Going, 51
 Friend, A teacher, 77
 Fundamentals, What are? 129
- Game, Not playing the, 167
 Giving, Intelligent, 62, 63
 Glasses, The broken, 45
 God and Company, 125
 God, Complimentary vote for, 177
 God is so elusive, 83
 God is everywhere, 44
 God's unopened letters, 184
 God, When, settles accounts, 128
 Good for nothing, 41
 Good, Stressing the, 110
 Gospel and unemployment, 160
 Grand Canyon, To bottom of, 81
 Gratitude, Having, 68
 Griddle cake, Which is top of, 17
- Happiness and the blue bird, 107
 Heart, A generous, 76
 Heels, New, on pavements, 87
 History, Corrections of, 142
 Hole, God lifts out of a, 78
 Holly, Christmas, 47
 Home, A Christian, 65
 Home, A, in the desert, 109
 Home as school, 72
 Home for supper, 79
 Home, The old, 29
 Home training, Value of, 101
 Home Missions, Spirit of, 110
 Horses, The training of, 101
- Jersey Plains, The, 149
 Jesus, Appraising, 86
 Jesus, explanation of success, 126
 Jesus, Things in common with, 84
 Job, A man without a, 159
- La Honda Pass, 43
 Lawless, 153

- Laws, Repealing violated, 154
 Liggett, Craig N., 125
 Ligonier Valley, The, 27
 Life, A despoiler of, 42
 Life, No second edition of, 54
 Life, The hazards of, 190
 Life, The values of, 161
 Long Island, 165
 Long run, In the, 127
 Look, The long, ahead, 51
 Losses, Hypothetical, real, 161

 Manhood, 75
 Manuscripts of the Bible, 179
 Memorial Day, 98
 Memories of boyhood, 30
 Memory, Impartial, 79
 Memory, Where, loiters, 67
 Mental attitudes, Clashing, 94
 Merced, Trip to Lake, 91
 Methods, Need of best, 186
 Minister, Misconception of work,
 133
 Minister's, The, son, 70
 Mistakes, Cannot afford, 189
 Mistakes, Irreparable, 162
 Misunderstanding, Reason for, 46
 Mood, The paralyzing, 54
 Moral issues in civilization, 174
 Moral mechanism, Damaged, 90
 Mortality, 34, 74
 Mother forgotten, 171
 Mother, Longing for, 36
 Mother, The, as teacher, 71
 Mountain, A crippled car on, 27
 Mule, Blind, on Bright Angel, 32
 Mule that would not back, 95

 New Year, 137
 Neutral, Flying into, 89
 Nickel, Saving a, 145
 Ninth Church history, 103
 Nothing to do, When we have, 47

 Obedience, The open way of, 78
 Old Grizzly, 33
 Old, Growing, rightly, 75
 Oldest, The, of living things, 33
 Old Man of the Mountain, The, 73
 Osawatomie, The crusader of, 141
 Out-of-doors, The, 81

 Palm Sunday, 85, 162
 Pageantry in the darkness, 175
 Pastor's three-fold work, 187
 Pastorate, A village, 77
 Patton, Dr. F. L. quoted, 56
 People, Trying to please, 134
 People who have no chance, 144
 Pilfering, 150
 Pilot knew his business, 157
 Playing the game, 121
 Pleasing so many, 133
 Power, No, 55
 Preacher, Difficulties of, 120
 Preaching to the preacher, 119

 Price, Paying the, 70
 Privilege, A question of, 187
 Property, Theories regarding, 146
 Pymatuning, The, swamp, 49

 Radio, The, not a substitute, 59
 Reality or seeming, 93
 Religion, A young man's, 163
 Religion, Dickens on, 148
 Religion, Real, counterfeit, 123
 Responsibility determined, 146
 Riches and poverty, 160
 Road, A dark, and pliers, 149
 Road, The side, 115
 Ruthlessness, The, of nature, 92

 Service, Called to, 78
 Shepherd, The, and his dog, 166
 Shoemaker, My, 87
 Sin, Folly of, revealed, 124
 Sky, How beautiful the, 109
 Sky, Schedule of the, 137
 Sorrow, How to bear, 66
 Speaking about the good, 38
 Speech without knowledge, 155
 Spire of Fourth Church, 189
 Spurgeon's conversion, 169
 Squeals, Eliminating, 21
 Step, Only a, into desert, 57
 Steps, Retracing wrong, 96
 Stewardship, The law of, 64
 Stock Market, Profits of, 161
 Stream, The life-giving, 105
 Suffering, The problem of, 99
 Sunset, A, on Long Island, 113
 Supper, A, in the open, 117

 Talents not everything, 168
 Task belonging to each, 28
 Tasks and bigger men, 112
 Tennessee Pass, Over the, 57
 Thanksgiving Day, 67
 Time, The wheel of, 137
 To-morrow, Working for, 52
 Tree broken by the storm, 143
 Trees, Planting, 51
 Trees, Big of California, 33

 Unemployment, Spiritual, 160

 Valley Forge, 97
 Visitation, The task of, 187
 Voice, The, in silent spaces, 43

 Wanderings in Georgia, 173
 Water, The Bitter, 41
 Way, Beautiful, and barge, 25
 Wayfarers, 147
 Workman, The, and the spool, 15
 World, Knowing your own, 88
 Worries, Ancient, 182
 Worship, A poor way to, 60

 Year, Another, 53
 Years, How many? 176
 Yosemite Valley, 39

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE

251.08 C937i

MAIN

Curry, William Melv/Illustrative stories



3 3540 00003 1206